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THE LIFE  
OF  
PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY



PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

FROM A DRAWING BY THE DUC DE MONTPENSIER





THE LIFE  
OF  
PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

BY  
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*IN TWO VOLUMES*  
VOL. I.



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## P R E F A C E.

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I SEND forth these volumes, which have occupied me long, with a sorrow mingled with the happiness of having brought my work to a close. At some time, when or where I cannot now remember, I had expressed my wish to undertake a life of Shelley. Words which I had forgotten were remembered by Sir Henry Taylor, and in the summer of 1883 he invited me, on behalf of Sir Percy and Lady Shelley, to consider whether my wish might not be realized under conditions of peculiar advantage—the advantage of access to all the manuscripts which form the chief treasures of Boscombe Manor. I had hoped to place a copy of this “Life of Shelley” in Sir Henry Taylor’s hands, and to have submitted it, with whatever of merit and of faults there is in it, to the judgment of his kindly wisdom. When tidings of his tranquil death reached me, not certainly my first thought, but one of my earliest thoughts, was perhaps a selfish one.

No man ever can have had more generous helpers than I have had in this work. My first thanks are due to Sir Percy and Lady Shelley. I have had access to all the Shelley papers in their possession, and permission to make use of them without reserve. The most important of these for a biographer—setting aside the originals of letters already published in whole or in part—is the journal kept in the main by Mary Shelley, with occasional short intermissions, from the day of her flight with Shelley to the close of his life; kept also from



time to time after his death. This lies at the back of almost all that I have written for the years from July 28, 1814, onwards. Together with unpublished letters of Shelley to Mary and of Mary to Shelley, it has enabled me to fill up passages of the life hitherto almost blank, as, for example, the story of that period of poverty in London which followed Shelley's first return from the Continent. Unhappily, the journal for one period of fourteen months (May, 1815-July, 1816) does not exist, or has been lost. Beside the journal, letters of Shelley and of Mary, Mary Shelley's transcript of the journal of Edward Williams, some unpublished writings of Shelley, and legal papers, the Boscombe Manuscripts include unpublished letters of Sir Timothy Shelley, Godwin, Fanny Godwin, Claire Clairmont, Charles Clairmont, Peacock, Hogg, Leigh Hunt, Mrs. Hunt, John Hunt, W. T. Baxter, Mr. and Mrs. Gisborne, Henry Reveley, Mrs. Hoppner, Miss Curran, Lady Mountcashell, Horace Smith, Emilia Viviani, Prince Mavrocordato, Trelawny, and others.

Second in importance to the Boscombe Manuscripts is the remarkable collection in the possession of Mr. H. Buxton Forman. These manuscripts also, through Mr. Forman's goodwill, have been absolutely at my disposal for the purpose of this biography. They comprise upwards of fifty hitherto unpublished letters of Shelley, which make it possible to tell important parts of the story heretofore either known imperfectly or wholly unknown. By far the greater number of these I have printed in whole or in part. Miss Clairmont's journals, and her note-books filled with fragmentary reminiscences, have been of the utmost service to me; but I have not transferred statements from these without indicating my sources. Mrs. Gisborne's unpublished journal, Miss Clairmont's copies of Mrs. Godwin's letters to Lady Mountcashell (see Appendix B.), and a multitude of letters, from Mr. Forman's collection, written by Mary Shelley, Godwin, Turner, Trelawny, Hogg, Leigh Hunt, and other members of Shelley's

circle of acquaintances, have been before me while I wrote, have added to my knowledge of facts, and have helped to guide my judgment. The legal documents in Mr. Forman's possession, together with those in possession of Sir Percy Shelley, and some which I myself procured, have enabled me to give a full and trustworthy account of the celebrated Chancery case of 1817-18.

Mr. W. M. Rossetti generously entrusted to me for several months his great compilation of all that can be considered autobiographical in Shelley's writings, published and unpublished, in verse and prose. This, the items of which are chronologically arranged, formed an excellent basis on which to go to work. His notes on the chronology of Shelley's letters to Hogg—letters printed confusedly in Hogg's "Life of Shelley"—were of great service to me, and in no instance did I find cause to dissent from Mr. Rossetti's conclusions as to their order. His collection included a careful transcript of Shelley's letters to Miss Hitchener, numbering nearly fifty, which are invaluable for understanding the story of Shelley's life during the eventful years 1811 and 1812. Mr. Rossetti was always ready to consider my troublesome questions, and to make fresh research on my behalf as to points suggested to me by his *Memoir of Shelley*.

Mr. Henry J. Slack allowed me to examine the originals of the Hitchener letters, and to make such transcripts as I desired. He copied for me one additional letter of interest discovered by him while my work was in progress.

From Dr. Richard Garnett, whose official work has prevented him from fulfilling the hope of many persons that he would be Shelley's biographer, I have received much substantial help and courtesies innumerable. He lent me the note-book into which he had transcribed the fragments afterwards printed in his delightful little volume, "*Relics of Shelley*," where I found some unprinted matter, drawn from various quarters, of considerable value. From him I received

a copy of Henry Reveley's manuscript notes on "Shelley Memorials." And he was always ready to help me with his rare knowledge both as a Shelley specialist and as a student in many other departments of literature.

My debt is great to Shelley's grandsons, Charles E. J. Esdaile, Esq., and the Rev. W. Esdaile. Mr. Charles Esdaile lent me the manuscript volume of unpublished poetry by Shelley, of which in its proper place I have given an account; and he permitted me to print for the first time all such poems or passages of poems as seemed to me of special biographical interest. The Rev. W. Esdaile enabled me to correct some errors of preceding biographers.

Mr. C. Kegan Paul, whose studies for his volumes on "William Godwin, his Friends and Contemporaries," made him peculiarly intimate with parts of my subject, kindly read my proof-sheets with an attention which saved me from several errors, although he becomes in no way responsible for such errors as may remain.

Mr. C. W. Frederickson, of New York, was good enough to copy for me all the letters of Shelley and of Mary Shelley in his collection. These included several addressed by Shelley to his publisher, Charles Ollier, which were of material service to my work.

Mr. J. Dykes Campbell lent me his copy of Medwin's "Life of Shelley," prepared by the author for a second edition, with many manuscript notes.

Mr. R. E. Egerton-Warburton permitted me to print the interesting letter of Shelley on the subject of "Laon and Cythna," of which he possesses the original.

Mr. Alfred Morrison gave me permission to make copies of the Shelley letters in his great collection of autographs. To this source I owe in particular one long and interesting letter written by Shelley from Milan in 1818.

Miss Stuart allowed me to copy and make use of some very interesting and important letters of Godwin addressed to

Mr. W. T. Baxter. From the original in her possession I copied the admirable letter written by Shelley to Mr. Baxter on December 29, 1817.

Mrs. Lonsdale gave me permission to make use of Shelley's letters to her father, T. Jefferson Hogg, as printed in Hogg's "Life of Shelley;" and she lent me a copy of the published letters to Peacock, in which the passages omitted by Peacock had been restored in manuscript.

Madame Gatayes, daughter of Shelley's friend Mr. Newton, most kindly took pains to put together for me her reminiscences of Shelley, which are of considerable interest to a biographer. From Mrs. Bannister, who also remembers Shelley, I received some personal reminiscences. Mrs. Stanger, daughter of Shelley's friend Mr. Calvert, communicated to me, through my friend the Rev. J. N. Hoare, of Keswick, her recollections of Shelley. And from Australia, through his daughter, Miss Tomkins, I have heard what Mr. Tomkins, who lodged in the same house with Shelley in Florence, has to tell of his former acquaintance.

To Mrs. Scarlett I owe a number of valuable notes on Shelley's ancestry, gathered from the most trustworthy sources, which I have used in my Appendix.

Mr. Archibald Constable put me in communication with members of the De Boinville family, and to him indirectly I owe the notes made for me by Madame Gatayes. He also copied for me notes of a conversation concerning Shelley and Godwin which his father had with Mrs. Turner in her elder years.

Mr. W. Sharp sent me a letter from Leigh Hunt to Severn, which contained one or two facts of interest that were new to me.

Miss Mathilde Blind has allowed me to make use of some interesting information respecting Shelley, obtained by her from Mrs. Blackmore, of Lynmouth.

Professor E. Perceval Wright gave me copies of some letters

of Shelley to Williams, of Tremadoc, made by him in 1856 when a lodger in the house of Mrs. Williams.

From the Rev. F. St. John Thackeray, Mr. Oscar Browning, and especially through the kind research of the Rev. E. D. Stone, I obtained information which enabled me to tell for the first time the true facts respecting Shelley's career as an Eton boy. Reminiscences of Shelley at Eton were also kindly sent to me by the Rev. R. J. Leslie, whose father was Shelley's intimate friend at school, and by the Bishop of Down and Connor (Dr. Reeves) from recollections of the conversations of the late Rev. E. Leslie.

From the Rev. Dr. Sadler I learnt some facts of interest about Shelley's father, and obtained some anecdotes of his boyhood.

The Rev. J. Franck Bright, Master of University College, gave me copies of the entries respecting Shelley on the books of University College, and of Mr. Ridley's account of the expulsion of Shelley and Hogg. Mr. A. C. Hillier, of Worcester College, made some research for me respecting Shelley at Oxford, which was not fruitless. Mr. Rose gave me information as to Shelley's relations with the firm of Slatter and Munday.

Through the help of my brother, the Bishop of Edinburgh, and of George Seton, Esq., Secretary to the General Registry of Scotland, discovery was made of the register of Shelley's first marriage. The Rev. R. Howel Brown, in like manner, made, at my request, the necessary research which led to the discovery of the baptismal registers of William and Clara Everina Shelley, and of Byron's daughter, Allegra.

Mr. Bertram Dobell communicated to me at once some discoveries respecting Shelley's writings made by him during the progress of my work.

I owe some of my information respecting Shelley in Wales to the research of my friend Mr. W. J. Craig.

Mr. George A. Greene gave me the use of his admirable

knowledge of Italian, when I sought to translate the letters of Emilia Viviani.

Another gentleman, who does not wish to be named, placed in my hands an important body of documents, from which I was permitted to transfer facts to my story.

An important series of letters by Shelley (not in possession of the Shelley family) has been seen by me in a transcript, and I have been aided in my work by a knowledge of the contents of these, although I have not been permitted to print them.

For help in various kinds and in various degrees, I have to thank Professor Atkinson, Mr. Robert Browning, Mr. W. E. H. Lecky, Mr. B. M. Ball, Mr. F. J. Furnivall, Count Plunkett, Mr. A. C. Swinburne, Mr. Alexander Ireland, Mr. Reginald S. Faber, Mr. R. S. Downs, Mr. T. W. Lyster, Professor Mantegazza, Dr. Todhunter, Dr. W. J. Fitzpatrick, Mrs. Marshall, Miss S. Brindle, Miss Margaret Noble, Rev. J. N. Hoare, Mr. Henry Hunter.

I may acknowledge in a general way my debt to all preceding writers who have attempted to recount in whole or in part the events of Shelley's life. Sometimes, as with Hogg for the Oxford months, I have stood aside and let another tell the story. It was no part of my purpose to be original at the expense of truth or directness. Some of Shelley's letters already printed I reprint, when it seems to me right to do so; these, however, are few in comparison with the number of letters now for the first time printed. What has been told already ninety-nine times it is my duty to tell for the hundredth time, connecting it with such new information as I possess. Of one thing the reader may feel assured—I have written nothing out of my fancy or out of the air. In many particulars my statements will be found to differ from those of Medwin and other writers; the reader may be certain that I have facts to go upon. Many of my pages are encumbered with notes. To discuss all the errors of preceding writers would require a separate volume of notes. I say this while very

grateful for the help which I have obtained from these writers.

The spelling of proper names has sometimes puzzled me. In writing "Harriet Westbrook," "Madocks" (of Marlow), "Mountcashell," "E. Elliker Williams," "Bishopsgate," etc., I have adopted forms sometimes of greater, never, I believe, of less, authority than those from which they differ.

I have reserved from the reader nothing that concerns Shelley. I have endeavoured to search out the truth in many quarters, and to tell the whole truth, as far as it is known to me. If I have erred in matters of opinion, I have tried to set before my reader materials, as abundant as it was in my power to exhibit, by which to correct my errors.

EDWARD DOWDEN.

TEMPLE ROAD, DUBLIN,  
*October 28, 1886.*

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## ERRATA.

### VOL. I.

- Page 18, line 20, *for* microscope *read* microscope.  
,, 54, line 10, *for* *studiemus* *read* *studiorum*.  
,, 123, line 17, *delete* afterwards Master of University College.  
,, 181, note, line 3 from bottom, *for* Pilford's *read* Pilfold's.  
,, 227, note, line 8 from bottom, *for* 1811 *read* 1812.  
,, 263, line 2, *for* Him *read* him.  
,, 269, line 1, *for* "On the green banks of Shannon when Sheelah was nigh"  
*read* "The Wounded Hussar."  
,, 297, line 16, *for* Barnstable *read* Barnstaple.  
,, 298, line 22, *for* British Channel *read* Bristol Channel.  
,, 303, note, *for* 1814 *read* 1813.  
,, 306, line 11, *for* October 10 *read* November 10.  
,, 336, line 22, *for* Gillie's *read* Gillies'.  
,, 384, line 26, *for* is *read* are.  
,, 513, line 19, *for* no sooner than *read* as soon as.

### VOL. II.

- Page 30, line 8 from bottom, *for* this same album at Montanvert *read* the album at Chamouni.  
,, 59, line 20, *for* two years *read* a year.  
,, 64, line 19, *insert* to *after* as.  
,, 75, line 5, *for* des *read* de.  
,, 84, line 13, *for* were *read* was.  
,, 86, note, line 7 from bottom, *for* Shelley's "Wat Tyler" *read* Southey's "Wat Tyler."  
,, 141, line 13, *for* Bethlehem *read* Bethlem.  
,, 184, line 16 from bottom, *delete* [?]; line 9 from bottom, *for* Pysche *read* Psyche;  
line 7 from bottom, *for* Cæsarii *read* Cæsaris.  
,, 200, line 10, *for* Smith *read* Hogg; line 12, *for* Horace Smith *read* T. J. Hogg.  
,, 213, line 8 from bottom, *for* moon *read* noon.  
,, 428, line 15, *delete* Fl.  
,, 459, last line of text, *after* twenty-ninth *insert* or thirtieth; note, last line,  
*after* 1793 *insert* or 1792.



# LIFE OF SHELLEY.

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## CHAPTER I.

### BOYHOOD.

THE Shelleys are an ancient family of Sussex. County CHAP. I.  
historians tell us of a Shelley who set foot in England with 1792-1810.  
William the Conqueror, and whose name appears in the roll  
of Battle Abbey. A Sir Richard Shelley held a position  
of trust in Huntingdon under Rufus; a Sir Thomas was  
ambassador to Spain under King John. To Sir William  
Shelley, brother of Sir Thomas—"that was attainted for  
endeavouring to set up King Richard II.," and perished on  
the scaffold, the ancestry of Percy Bysshe Shelley has been  
traced.\* It was a Shelley—judge of the Common Pleas—who  
was sent by King Henry VIII. to demand of Cardinal Wolsey  
the surrender of York Place. His son, Sir Richard, was  
famous among the swordsmen of religion; as English Grand  
Prior of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, a distinction conferred on him by Queen Mary at Cardinal Pole's request, he  
sat next the Lord Abbot of Westminster in the Upper House  
of Parliament. From Protestant England Sir Richard withdrew to Spain, there as English Grand Prior enjoying the  
eminent title of Turcopolier. He hastened towards Malta  
when the Turkish galleys besieged St. Elmo, but was recalled

\* By Berry: "County Genealogies: Sussex."

CHAP. I. while on his way; afterwards he enjoyed the friendship of 1792-1810. La Valette, and on La Valette's death departed, and came to Venice, where two medals bearing his effigy were struck.\* The Shelleys were at this time conspicuous by their devotion to falling or desperate causes; one was imprisoned for presenting a petition against the act requiring seminary priests to fly the realm; another was attainted for treason, and executed on a charge of conspiring to slay Elizabeth and deliver Mary Queen of Scots from prison. From an Edward Shelley, of Worminghurst, who died in the year of the Spanish Armada, son of Sir John Shelley, of Michelgrove, that branch of the family, in no respect illustrious before the present century, is said to have descended which, on the other side of the Atlantic, a hundred and fifty years ago, was represented by Timothy Shelley and by his son Bysshe (so named after his grandmother's maiden name), who returned to England, married two heiresses, obtained a baronetcy in gratitude for favours expected by the Whigs, and lived long enough to hear of the poem "Queen Mab," written by his grandson and namesake, Percy Bysshe.†

Bysshe Shelley was a gentleman of the old school, with a dash of New World cleverness, push, and mammon-worship. Six feet high, handsome, stately in bearing, clear-witted, yet wilful, he achieved greatness by bold and dexterous strokes. There are vague rumours of Bysshe's frugal ways in early life, and rumours of some dim American bride;

\* Engravings from these medals are given in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for September, 1785. See also Gough's "British Topography," vol. ii. p. 295; *Notes and Queries*, 1st ser., xi. p. 179; Horsfield's "History of Sussex," and Dallaway's "Rape of Bramber" (ed. Cartwright). On the relationship of the Shelleys with Bysshes, see *Notes and Queries*, 5th ser., viii. pp. 441, 442.

† The pedigree traced to Henry Shelley, of Worminghurst, who died 1623, is given by Mr. Forman in the first volume of Shelley's Prose Works. According to Berry ("Sussex Genealogies"), this Henry Shelley was son of Henry Shelley, of Worminghurst, and grandson of Edward Shelley, of the same place. Edward Shelley was son of Sir John Shelley, of Michelgrove, who was great-grandson of Sir William Shelley, brother of Sir Thomas, who was attainted and executed in the first year of Henry IV.'s reign.

but he must have made haste in wooing and wedding and CHAP. I.  
burying his transatlantic wife, if ever she had existence, for 1792-1810.  
he was not more than one and twenty years of age when a  
Sussex heiress, Miss Mary Catherine Michell, only child of  
the Rev. Theobald Michell, of Horsham, became Mrs. Bysshe  
Shelley. We are told that Miss Michell's guardian would not  
consent to his ward's marriage, that it was a runaway match,  
and that the wedding was celebrated in London by the parson  
of the Fleet. This Mary Michell was the grandmother of  
Percy Bysshe Shelley. Beside the poet's father, she bore to  
her husband two daughters, and died almost immediately  
after the birth of the second. Mr. Bysshe Shelley was thus,  
before thirty, a widower with three young children. Nine  
years later he won the hand of another great heiress, Elizabeth  
Jane Sidney, daughter of William Perry, of Penshurst, Kent. In  
her veins ran the blood of Sir Philip Sidney. We are assured  
by Medwin that she also eloped with the resistless Bysshe. Her  
first boy, John, became in after-years the baronet Sir John  
Shelley-Sidney, of Penshurst, and left a son, Philip Charles  
Sidney, who in 1835 was created Baron de l'Isle and Dudley.

It was in 1806 that Bysshe himself became Sir Bysshe  
Shelley, Baronet; he had been a staunch Whig, attached to  
the Duke of Norfolk's party in the county, and this was the  
reward of his loyalty and the incentive to its continuance.  
But though Bysshe was now a baronet, and had spent some  
£80,000, it is said, in building himself Castle Goring, the old  
man cared not to enjoy his honours or his wealth, still toiling  
at the punishment assigned to the avaricious, rolling before  
him to the grave a golden weight which perpetually increased.  
He lived at Horsham, in a cottage house—Arun House it was  
named—hard by the church, vexed with gout and infirmities  
of age, and waited on by a solitary servant. He was "as  
indifferent to his personal appearance," writes one acquainted  
with him, "as he was to his style of living. He wore a round  
frock, and passed a portion of his time in the tap-room of



CHAP. I.  
1792-1810. the Swan Inn at Horsham, not drinking, indeed, with its frequenters, but arguing with them in politics." With his son Timothy and his daughter he was on ill terms, but he had a liking for his grandson and namesake, occasionally aiding him, we are told, with a gift of money, or paying the bill which the Horsham or Worthing printer, Phillips, would furnish for putting in type some of the boy's early verses. Stately old Sir Bysshe impressed the townsfolk as melancholy; perhaps, said they, he was "crossed in love" in his youth. He invited no friendships and lived apart from persons of his own station, fearing not God nor regarding man, but enlarging his rent-roll, and adding to his thousands in the funds—so fine a gentleman, yet buried alive under his settlements and his indentures.\*

Bysshe's son, Timothy Shelley, was nearly forty years old when his first child was born. He went as a youth to University College, Oxford, and afterwards travelled on the Continent. He was slight of figure, tall, very fair, with the blue Shelley eyes.† He had a better heart than his father, and not so clear a head. Bysshe knew his province and kept to it. Timothy Shelley had a wrong-headed way of meaning well and doing ill; he had a semi-illiterate regard for letters, a mundane respect for religion; his views on morals were of the most gentlemanly kind, but not exactly touched with enthusiasm; he dealt in public affairs without possessing public spirit, and gave his party an unwavering vote when a member of the House of Commons; in private life he was kindly, irritable, and despotic; in manners an aspirant

\* Shelley, in a letter dated January 26, 1812, says that his grandfather had "acted very ill to three wives." . . . "He is a complete atheist, and builds all his hopes on annihilation."

Medwin writes, "Two of his daughters by the second marriage led so miserable a life under his roof, that they eloped from him; a consummation he devoutly wished, as he thereby found an excuse for giving them no dowries, and though they were married to two highly respectable men, and one had a numerous family, he made no mention of either of them in his will."

† Sir Bysshe was brown-eyed.

Chesterfield, yet one who could on occasions bustle and fret CHAP. I.  
1792-1810. and scold; when least venerable he insisted most on his paternal prerogative; he was profoundly diplomatic in matters of little consequence. Mingling with his self-importance there was a certain sensibility, genuine though not deep, and tears of tenderness or vexation came readily to his eyes: a kindly, pompous, capricious, well-meaning, ill-doing, wrong-headed man.\* Mr. Timothy Shelley was married, in October, 1791, to Elizabeth, daughter of Charles Pilfold, of Effingham, county Surrey, whose rare beauty descended to her children. We are told that she was a woman of strong good sense, and, though not a lover of literature, an excellent letter-writer. There is testimony to show that her temper was violent and domineering. "Mild and tolerant," her son once called her, "yet narrow-minded;" but there were times when her mildness disappeared. She had a special grievance against the boy because he was little of what every country gentleman ought to be—a follower of field sports. He must fish from the boat while she looked on; or she would send him forth with the gamekeeper to bring in a bag of game. Shelley, it is said, would sit poring over a book while the gamekeeper was engaged in slaying his fellow-creatures, and the birds would be presented to Mrs. Shelley, by an innocent fraud, as the spoil of Master Bysshe.

Mr. and Mrs. Timothy Shelley had their abode at Field Place, in the parish of Warnham, Sussex, a property which came into the family through the marriage of Bysshe Shelley with Miss Michell. Field Place lies a mile south of the village of Warnham—a comfortable eighteenth-century mansion, with the many windows of one story showing above an open portico† along its front which faces the west. From the

\* Sir Timothy's respectable theological orthodoxy was outraged by his son's opinions; but he liked also, as a good Whig, to be liberal within due bounds. He entered himself as a subscriber for two copies of the Rev. Mr. Sadler's Sermons (Unitarian), under the title "A friend to religious liberty," and said, "When Mr. Edwards dies, I should like Mr. Sadler as our clergyman."

† Covered in by Sir James Duke in 1846.

CHAP. I. garden looking westward is seen the mountainous outline of  
 1792-1810. Hind Head; to the south, the downs are faintly visible, with  
 their suggestions of peace and endless pasture. The country  
 in the immediate neighbourhood is chiefly arable and grazing  
 land, with some wood and coppice interspersed. Warnham  
 village clusters around the church with its old lichen-covered  
 tower. Walking south-east from Field Place, you come, after  
 a couple of miles, to the little town of Horsham, the older part  
 of which has for centre "a cool, broad half-square, half-street,  
 planted with ancient trees and flanked on either side by  
 quaint houses showing every kind of elevation, sky-line, and  
 gable. At the end of this half-square, half-street, stands the  
 church, a noble building, with a tall shingled spire, which has  
 purposely been built slightly askew. Round about the church  
 lies the churchyard, and just outside the gate, southwards,  
 runs the Arun, dammed up to turn a mill, the clacking of  
 which can be heard in the churchyard. Across the river the  
 ground rises towards Den Place, with its famous avenues  
 and glens. . . . Seen from the south-west corner of the  
 meadow just across the Arun, near the stile against the mill,  
 the river, trees, and church spire form a picture precisely  
 typical of the best English scenery."\* To the north-east  
 spreads St. Leonard's Forest, luxuriant with beech and birch  
 and pine, sinking and rising to woody dingles and slopes. At  
 night a headless spectre careered through the wood, the terror  
 of solitary horsemen, for the phantom would leap to a seat  
 behind the rider, and so accompany him to the edges of his  
 domain. Here in the time of King James I. lurked a strange  
 and monstrous serpent nine feet or rather more in length;  
 coming forth on occasions from the unwholesome shades and  
 overgrown hollows, he was seen to move upon feet, and to be  
 provided with two great bunches on either side which, some

\* W. Hale White, "Notes on Shelley's Birthplace," in *Macmillan's Magazine*,  
 March, 1879, from whom I have also taken a few words elsewhere in these para-  
 graphs. A good account of the town and its neighbourhood is given in "Hor-  
 sham, its History and Antiquities" (W. Macintosh, 1868).



FIELD PLACE, 1812.



thought, would in time grow to wings; he could jet out his CHAP. I.  
 neck an ell, and cast his venom about four rods; a serpent of 1792-1810.  
 countenance very proud, at the sight or hearing of men or  
 cattle raising his head and seeming to listen and look about  
 with great arrogancy.\*

In a small room of Field Place, with windows looking south and west over the placid Sussex grass-land, Percy Bysshe Shelley, the first child of his parents, was born on Saturday, August 4, 1792.† It has been recorded that the day was calm and pleasant, but there was thunder in the moral atmosphere of that summer month. Along the Sussex roads, in coaches, in waggons, in fish-carts, aristocrat emigrants were pouring from revolutionary France. On the day of Shelley's birth it was decreed by the National Assembly that all religious houses should be sold for the benefit of the nation. That 4th of August was the eve of Louis XVI's last *levée*—a brilliant spectacle, through which sad presages were felt and seen in many hearts and eyes. A few nights more, and the Paris steeples clanged and boomed with all their storm-bells for the desperate morning of the 10th—red dawn of a long, tempestuous day. But in the halcyon nest of babyhood the future singer of liberty, equality, and fraternity lay safe—a pretty fledgling, already distinguished by his delicate hands and feet, his bright down of baby hair (afterwards curling in ringlets), and his great blue, luminous eyes. They called him Bysshe after his grandfather; Percy had been a name in the

\* The tract of 1614 which records these details is reproduced in the second volume of the *Harleian Miscellany*. The headless spectre is mentioned by Medwin, i. 63, 64.

† An engraved plate over the fireplace of this bedroom bears the inscription "Percy Bysshe Shelley was born in this chamber, August 4, 1792."

Shrine of the dawning speech and thought  
 Of Shelley, sacred be,  
 To all who bow where Time has brought  
 Gifts to Eternity."

The quatrain is by Mr. R. Garnett.

CHAP. I. family for two or three preceding generations.\* How the  
 1792-1810. hours of early childhood glided by we know not; Shelley has left us no poetical autobiography as did Wordsworth, though all Shelley's poems are fragments of a great confession; but there is one passage designed to have a place in "Epipsychidion," and afterwards cancelled, which shows that there hung over his earliest recollections that same glory of light and wonder and immortality, the too-early fading of which Wordsworth laments in his great "Ode." What, asks Shelley, is the nature of that joy "which serene infancy perceives not" as the hours go past "each in a chain of blossoms," and which now imagination rather than memory must evoke from that vanished dawn of the opening spirit?—

"When everything familiar seemed to be  
 Wonderful, and the immortality  
 Of this great world, which all things must inherit,  
 Was felt as one with the awakening spirit,  
 Unconscious of itself." †

In Shelley's prose writings is a reminiscence of a like kind. "Let us recollect our sensations as children," he says. "What a distinct and intense apprehension had we of the world and of ourselves! . . . We less habitually distinguished all that we saw and felt, from ourselves. They seemed, as it were, to constitute one mass. There are some persons who in this respect are always children. Those who are subject to the state called reverie feel as if their nature were dissolved into the surrounding universe, or as if the surrounding universe were absorbed into their being." ‡

\* The date of Shelley's baptism, as recorded in the registers of Warnham Church, is September 7. See Mr. W. H. White's "Notes on Shelley's Birthplace."

† Forman's edition of Shelley's Poetical Works, vol. ii. p. 395.

‡ Compare Wordsworth's record of his feelings as a boy when seated alone upon some jutting eminence to watch the first gleam of dawn ("The Prelude," book ii.):—

"Oft in these moments such a holy calm  
 Would overspread my soul that bodily eyes  
 Were utterly forgotten, and what I saw  
 Appeared like something in myself—a dream,  
 A prospect in the mind."

It was happy for Shelley that his childhood was not CHAP. I. solitary. Companionship became the counterpoise to reverie. 1792-1810. At nine years old he was the brother of four living sisters; another, the earlier Hellen of two who bore that name, had died after a handbreadth of existence, before Bysshe was yet four years old. In 1806 Shelley's only brother was born; John Shelley lived to be sixty, but he can have been little of a companion to Bysshe, who was so much his elder, who spent but brief snatches of time at Field Place after John had passed out of babyhood, and who left England for ever when John Shelley was a boy of twelve. One picture of the brothers at play lived in the recollection of their sister. Bysshe was at home from Eton for the holidays; John was still a child in petticoats; through their sister's optic glass of memory we can view the elder boy at play with the younger under the fir-trees of the lawn, pushing him gently down, only to let him rise and beg for a succession of such soft tumbles, and himself rolling with laughing glee on the grass; then trundling the little lad in his carriage along the garden walks, until carriage and rider tossed sideways, and a sudden cry of distress from the strawberry-bed brought sympathy and solace for Master John, and a rebuke for the innocent culprit Bysshe.

What we know of Shelley's home life during his early years is told by the second Hellen, who was born in 1799, and saw a good deal of her brother up to his entrance at Oxford, and saw little or nothing of him after that date. To be the elder brother of a troop of small sisters is to possess a high prerogative; it is to be a hero, and, if the hero chooses, a tyrant. But such could not be Shelley's choice. He was the companion of the little girls on walks, leading them to delightful and difficult places across fences and over walls and gates, which could not be attempted without his aid; he loved to make his way into the nursery, and become their leader in fantastic sports; at other times he would sing for them; or, when his sisters came to the dining-room for dessert, would



CHAP. I. take one upon his knee, and delight her with endless tales of  
1792-1810. mystery and wonder. It was especially his part, as elder brother and hero, to advance before the younger and more timid ones into regions of imaginary enchantment and terror, which he had conjured up and localized for the joy of the adventure. There was a low passage in Field Place, above which surely must lurk some secret chamber, and Bysshe would probe the ceiling with his stick to discover its whereabouts. There was a long-closed garret, undoubtedly the habitation of an alchemist old and grey, with venerable beard, where by lamplight the sage pored upon some magic tome. Out of doors were beings as old and as prodigious—the “Great Tortoise” that lived in Warnham Pond, and the “Great Old Snake” which inhabited the gardens of Field Place. To see the Great Tortoise was hard; but could that be a reason for doubting his existence, when sounds, otherwise unaccountable, might ever and anon be heard? As for the Old Snake, he may have been the same that haunted St. Leonard’s Forest two hundred years ago, since grown into a mysterious friend of man; his end was piteous—killed, according to the legend, by the gardener’s scythe, but not before he had left nestling in Shelley’s imagination a brood of amiable serpents with which readers of the poet’s verse are familiar. Sometimes Bysshe and his sisters became themselves a crew of supernatural monsters: the little girls, in strange garbs, were fiends; Bysshe the great devil bearing along the passage to the back door a fire-stove flaming with his infernal liquids. When Bysshe one day set a fagot-stack on fire, the excuse was a charming one—he did so that he might have “a little hell of his own.” \* The fairy-land of science lay bordering the land of fantasy and romance; to pass from one to the other was easy. Now it was chemistry whose marvels and metamorphoses Bysshe displayed; now electricity, when the sisters would hold hands

\* The Rev. Dr. Sadler, whose father was the General Baptist minister at Horsham, tells me this story of Shelley’s boyhood on good authority.

and form a chain, Hellen hiding in her heart certain tremors, CHAP. I.  
 until they could be no longer concealed, when her brother, 1792-1810.  
 with a magnanimity rare among men and boys of science,  
 released her from all future part in such demonstrations. In  
 Bysshe's pranks we hear of no unkindness to any living  
 creature; but there was in them much cheerful fun, sometimes  
 taking wild or fantastic form, and a delight in merry mystifi-  
 cations. "On one occasion he gave the most minute details  
 of a visit he had paid to some ladies with whom he was  
 acquainted at our village. He described their reception of  
 him, their occupations, and the wandering in their pretty  
 garden"—all which was sportive invention, motiveless except  
 for the pleasure of a jest. At another time a countryman  
 passed the windows of Field Place, with a truss of hay forked  
 over his shoulders; the intruder was recalled, and there stood  
 Bysshe, disguised, and setting forth to Horsham, where a  
 young lady, suffering from the grievous malady of chilblains,  
 had been recommended hay-tea for her complaint. On yet  
 another occasion a lad called on Colonel Sergison at the  
 Horsham lawyer's house, and asked, in Sussex dialect, to be  
 engaged as gamekeeper's boy; his suit, it seems, was success-  
 ful, and "then, of course, there was an explosion of laughter,"  
 and the jester stood revealed.\* Shelley is said by romantic  
 biographers never to have laughed, but, though not humorous  
 in the large sense of that word which we apply to Chaucer  
 and to Fielding, he loved a droll incident or witty crank, and  
 in boyhood his animal spirits supported his intellectual or  
 imaginative pleasure in the surprises of fancy and wit. But  
 the serious mood was present in boyhood too. He loved to  
 walk out alone under the stars, contemplating and musing.  
 What could these lonely night-wanderings intend? "The old

\* Dr. Sadler tells me of another of Shelley's mystifications. A gentleman gave a lift in his gig to a long-haired lad. They fell to talking of Percy Bysshe Shelley, and what was thought of him. Some people, said the gig-man, thought him crazy. On nearing Horsham, the long-haired lad—Shelley himself, but still unknown—bade good-bye to his friendly charioteer.

CHAP. I. servant of the family would follow him, and bring in his 1792-1810. report that 'Master Bysshe only took a walk, and came back again.' "

Such an elder brother as this—so kind, so fertile in wondrous devices, so playful, so serious, so beautiful whatever was his mood—how could he fail to be the hero of his sisters? They watched him as he repeated long passages of Latin at his father's bidding, accompanying his recitation with dramatic action, and wondered what the mysterious utterances might mean. Even his clothes had an air about them superior to Horsham coats and trousers. Hellen Shelley tells how her eyes rested approvingly on the well-fitting silk pantaloons, ordered by Bysshe at Eton, as he stood before her, his coat-tails to the fire, in an attitude loved by man and boy; the faultless garments "excited," she says, "my silent though excessive admiration." In exchange for such sisterly homage, Shelley gave warm affection and kind companionship. Memory is a humorist who uses a jest to put an edge upon his pathos. If Margaret Shelley, born a year or two after Hellen, were bidden to recall her brother's face and form, a vision would come back of herself a little girl of five, seated at the drawing-room window, of a gentle face without, pressed nose and lips against the pane, and of a kiss given through the glass—the face of Bysshe who was just recovered from an illness and had gone forth for the first time to take the air. All children had a charm for him. "He had a wish to educate some child, and often talked seriously of purchasing a little girl for that purpose. A tumbler, who came to the back door to display her wonderful feats, attracted him, and he thought she would be a good subject for the purpose." As he walked or trotted on his pony about the beautiful lanes and fields surrounding Field Place, he would explain these plans of education. When Shelley had read "Peter Wilkins," his purpose altered. He would have children of his own, little winged ones, like those in the country of the Glumms and Gawrys, and their mother

should be, like Peter's wife, a woman who could skim and CHAP. I.  
float upon the air. 1792-1810.

At six years old, Shelley was sent to learn his *quies*, his *quaes*, and his *quods* from a Welsh parson, the Rev. Mr. Edwards, who ministered at Warnham—a good old man, but, says Medwin, “of very limited intellects.” Whether the pupil profited in his Cambrian Latin accidence as much as little William Page did under the tuition of Sir Hugh Evans, is not recorded. Four years later, a new pupil appeared at Sion House Academy, Isleworth, near Brentford, where Dr. Greenlaw and his assistants instructed fifty or sixty lads, chiefly of the middle class, in Latin, Greek, French, writing, arithmetic, geography, and the elements of astronomy.\* Bysshe Shelley, the new boy, was tall for ten years old, slight of figure, with a well-set head, on which abundant locks, now of a rich brown hue, curled naturally; his complexion was fair and ruddy, like a girl's. The luminous, large blue eyes had at one time a dreamy softness, at another a fixed wild beauty, or under the influence of excitement became restlessly brilliant; and then his voice, usually soft and low, grew tuneless and strident; the expression of his countenance “was one of exceeding sweetness and innocence,” full of animation when his interest had been aroused. Sion House Academy was a large, somewhat gloomy brick building, formerly belonging to the Bishop of London; its situation was open and healthy; a garden was attached, and a playground walled in, and possessing a solitary elm, known as the Bell-tree, from its serving as campanile for the harsh summoner whose tongue jangled forth the order to resume lessons. There was certainly no luxury or refinement at Sion House; economy was kept well in view by Mrs. Greenlaw and her sister, Miss Hodgkins. There is a tribe of boys who are never sufficiently well treated; but a boy who was not dainty had not much to complain of in the

\* Medwin says that Shelley was ten years old when he went to Sion House Academy. He speaks (p. 34) of his second or third year at school; but he cannot have had a third year if he entered at ten, for he went to Eton in 1804.

CHAP. I. matters of bed and board. The doctor's eldest daughter 1792-1810. taught novices their letters. Dr. Greenlaw himself, a vigorous old Scotch divine, choleric and hard-headed, but not unkindly—"a man of rather liberal opinions," said Shelley—led the more stalwart scholars in the attack on Virgil, Homer, and the choruses of Sophocles. With spectacles pushed high above his dark and bushy eyebrows, the dominie would stimulate the laggard construers. Frequent dips into his mull of Scotch snuff helped him to sustain the wear and tear of the classroom.

The change was great for Shelley from the freedom of the Sussex fields and lanes, and the loving companionship of younger sisters, to enclosure within the walls of Sion House Academy, and the battling of an obstreperous crowd. The average British schoolboy has virtues of his own, but he is not a being compact of light and sweetness. He loves to deploy his expanding powers in harrying all creatures less brawny than himself; he is a master in the art of tormenting; multiplied by sixty he becomes formidable. The new-comer was only ten years old, and had a look of innocence and gentleness almost girlish. They pounced upon him in a moment. Could he peg a top, play leap-frog, bat or bowl, spar with a fellow, run a race? The shy and bewildered boy could give no answers that were satisfactory, whereon arose shouts of derision. To all this impertinence "he made no reply," says Medwin, "but with a look of disdain written in his countenance turned his back on his new associates, and when he was alone found relief in tears."

The writer of these words, Shelley's cousin, Thomas Medwin, some years his senior, was a pupil under Dr. Greenlaw when the new boy arrived.\* As a relation and an elder, Medwin assumed the part of a patronizing superior, but we

\* Medwin states his relationship to Shelley thus: "Miss Michell, Sir Bysshe's first wife, was my grandfather's first cousin; and my mother bore the same degree of consanguinity to Miss Pilfold, their fathers being brothers."

do not find that he undertook the more troublesome office of CHAP. I. protector. The tyranny of the strong over the weak had not 1792-1810. been organized at Sion House into a regular system of fagging. The tasks of the fag are sufficiently defined, and he has rights as well as duties. At Sion House the domineering lords were paramount only by right of muscle; they issued such commands as their pleasure or caprice suggested, and secured obedience by the logic of the fist. His equals were quick to discover that Shelley was highly sensitive to pain, easily excited, and subject to paroxysms of passion when thwarted or provoked. It seemed as if a generous Providence, pitying the tedium of their learned hours, had specially sent him to be tormented. At times it became evident that he had in him something dangerous. When driven desperate, he would seize the first thing that came to hand—even any little boy, says his schoolfellow Rennie—to fling at his persecutors. When it was possible he kept aloof from the swarm, and took no part in their sports or strife. "He passed among his schoolfellows," says Medwin, "as a strange and unsocial being; for when a holiday relieved us from our tasks, and the other boys were engaged in such sports as the narrow limits of our prison court allowed, Shelley, who entered into none of them, would pace backwards and forwards—I think I see him now—along the southern wall," pursuing his own shadowy thoughts, secluded by his vivid imaginings from the riot and the din. Strange and unsocial in the eyes of some, yet, "if treated with kindness," says a schoolfellow, "he was very amiable, noble, high-spirited, and generous." \*

Shelley did not fall in love with his Latin and Greek grammars, but he grew in scholarship almost unawares, and stood high in the school before he left for Eton. He learned, says Medwin, "seemingly without study, for during school-hours he was wont to gaze at the passing clouds—all that could be seen from the lofty windows which his desk fronted

\* Sir John Rennie,

CHAP. I. —or watch the swallows as they flitted past, with longing for  
 1792-1810. their wings; or would scrawl in his school-books—a habit he always continued—rude drawings of pines and cedars, in memory of those on the lawn of his native home,” until recalled from wandering fancies by a sudden buffet from the master’s palm.\* Shelley can hardly have been a favourite with the doctor, for he was guilty of the grievous offence of refusing to laugh at the doctor’s unsavoury jests (all through his life Shelley was intolerant of gross or immodest mirth); and to blow up the boundary palings with gunpowder, or his desk-lid in mid school-hours, to the amazement of masters and boys, was not precisely the way to soothe the temper of a choleric old gentleman. Then, too, in some things he was a hopeless dunce. Southey has said of himself that his dancing-master would have had much less trouble in teaching a bear than in teaching him, and far better success. Shelley fled from the dancing-lesson, if possible; if not, he went through his paces, a recalcitrant martyr. “Mon Dieu!” exclaimed the teacher, “Master Shelley will not learn anything; he is so *gauche*.”†

\* Miss Shelley speaks of the extraordinary retentiveness of Bysshe’s memory. “Even as a little child, Gray’s lines on ‘The Cat and the Gold-fish’ were repeated, word for word, after once reading; a fact I frequently heard from my mother.”

† Here may be recorded an anecdote of Shelley at Sion House Academy, told by Mr. W. C. Gellibrand, who died April 20, 1884, in his ninety-third year. “Shelley was in the class above me, and one day when I was sitting with my slate before me, trying to invent a Latin nonsense verse to be written down for the scanning, Shelley came along and asked what I was doing. I told him, and he said, ‘Give me your slate, and I will do it for you, and you can go.’ So off I went to play, and he took my slate. When I came back I had hardly time to look at what he had written, much less to copy it afresh, when I had to hand my slate in to the master. I was soon called up and asked, ‘Did you write this?’ I am sorry to say I said ‘Yes;’ but when I was asked to construe it, I found it ran as follows:—

‘Hos ego versiculos scripsi, sed non ego feci.’

Explanation was demanded, and on the truth being discovered I was flogged. However” (so Mr. Gellibrand was accustomed to conclude with quiet satisfaction), “I gave him a pummelling for it afterwards.” Mr. Gellibrand used to describe Shelley “as like a girl in boy’s clothes, fighting with open hands, and rolling on the floor when flogged, not from the pain, but ‘from a sense of indignity’” (Augustine Birrell, in the *Athenæum*, May 3, 1884).

And yet he was learning many things. For tales of CHAP. I. marvel and mystery his appetite was unappeasable; sixpenny 1792-1810. volumes, bound in blue wrappers, telling of haunted castles, necromancers, bandits, murderers, were eagerly purchased and devoured. In a circulating library at Brentford he came upon Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett, but found them tame. More to his liking were Anne Radcliffe's romances, and others of less note since departed to the limbo of forgotten books,\* which may have had influence on Shelley's crude endeavours as romance-writer a few years later. What occupied Shelley's imagination became for him a reality; his waking dreams were of frequent recurrence, and were followed by much nervous excitement; "his eyes flashed, his lips quivered, his voice was tremulous with emotion, a sort of ecstasy came over him." He had faith in apparitions and the evocation of the dead; his sleep was afflicted by frightful dreams. One summer night he came gliding by moonlight into Medwin's dormitory, open-eyed, but wrapt in slumber. He advanced to the window, which was open; his cousin sprang out of bed, seized his arm and waked him. "He was excessively agitated, and after leading him back with some difficulty to his couch, I sat by him for some time, a witness to the severe erethism of his nerves which the sudden shock produced." To check any future tendency to forbidden roamings by night, he was punished with all proper severity.

At this time, fathers who had heard of Herschel and Priestley and Davy, and their great doings, were beginning to think it a fine thing that their boys at school should become youthful natural philosophers. Adam Walker, a self-taught genius, born on the banks of Windermere, who, after failing in business, and failing in an attempt to turn the island-hermit of his lake, had set his wits to work and invented a score of scientific toys—the patent empyreal air-stove, the patent

\* Among these books a certain "Zofloya, or the Moor," has been mentioned; but I believe "Zofloya" was not published until after Shelley had left Brentford.



CHAP. I. celestina harpsichord, the eidouranion or transparent orrery, 1792-1810. and what not,—old Walker had been engaged to deliver scientific lectures at Eton College, and Dr. Greenlaw would have him also for the benefit and credit of his academy. For Shelley, as a boy, science transformed the world into a place of enchantment; it was the true nineteenth-century magic; the bounds of existence receded before its touch, and the possibilities of human achievement became incalculable. Our globe of earth moved as one world amid a myriad of shining sister-spheres, some of them peopled, perhaps, with beings infinitely more wonderful than man. Air, earth, and water no longer hemmed us in as with rude prison walls; at the touch of chemical analysis the prison walls dissolved; and whither and how far might we not pursue the fleeting elements of all things? To counterpoise in our imagination the universe of the infinitely great, there was the universe, revealed by the solar microscope, of the infinitesimally little. Shelley gazed, and desired to be himself possessor of such a magical revealer of life in its minute beginnings—a desire afterwards gratified, when the solar microscope became one of his most cherished possessions.

Thus his intellect was startled, and grew wide-eyed and full of wonder. Nor was his heart asleep. His love for his kindred, especially for his mother and sisters, was quick and tender; it was not without manifest joy, says one who knew Shelley well at a later period, that he received a letter from them. And here in the arid waste of the pedagogue's domain, amid the riot of animal spirits in a crowd of untrained boys, the bullying, the provocation, the consequent paroxysms of wrath and sudden whirls of passion, amid all which made him seem to his schoolfellows "a strange, unsocial being," Shelley had found a spring of exquisite happiness in comradeship with one chosen friend. In delicate natures such friendship is sometimes the harbinger of yet unimagined love—the opening of the curtains of the dawn; the illumination, still vague, yet

pure as pearl, which for its own hour precedes the uprising of the sun.

CHAP. I.  
1792-1810.

"The nature of love and friendship," wrote Shelley, "is very little understood, and the distinctions between them ill established. This latter feeling—at least a profound and sentimental attachment to one of the same sex—often precedes the former. It is not right to say, merely, that friendship is exempt from the smallest alloy of sensuality. It rejects with disdain all thoughts but those of an elevated and imaginative character. I remember forming an attachment of this kind at school. I cannot recall to my memory the precise epoch at which this took place; but I imagine it must have been at the age of eleven or twelve.

"The object of these sentiments was a boy about my own age, of a character eminently generous, brave, and gentle; and the elements of human feeling seemed to have been, from his birth, genially compounded within him. There was a delicacy and a simplicity in his manners inexpressibly attractive. It has never been my fortune to meet with him since my school-boy days; but either I confound my present recollections with the delusions of past feelings, or he is now a source of honour and utility to every one around him. The tones of his voice were so soft and winning, that every word pierced into my heart; and their pathos was so deep, that in listening to him the tears have involuntarily gushed from my eyes. Such was the being for whom I first experienced the sacred sentiments of friendship. I remember in my simplicity writing to my mother a long account of his admirable qualities and my own devoted attachment. I suppose she thought me out of my wits, for she returned no answer to my letter. I remember we used to walk the whole play-hours up and down by some moss-covered palings, pouring out our hearts in youthful talk. We used to speak of the ladies with whom we were in love, and I remember that our usual practice was to confirm each other in the everlasting fidelity in which we had bound our-

CHAP. I. selves towards them and towards each other. I recollect  
1792-1810. thinking my friend exquisitely beautiful. Every night when we parted to go to bed we kissed each other like children, as we still were."

A boy David, ruddy and of a fair countenance, with a boy Jonathan, each loving the other as his own soul. The name of Shelley's comrade we are left to conjecture. Can it have been Tredcroft, who, another schoolfellow, Rennie, tells us, came from Shelley's county, Sussex; who, like Shelley, was thought a "peculiar character," and was recognized as possessing "considerable poetical talent"? \*

In 1804, Shelley's schooling under Dr. Greenlaw seems to have ended. Certainly he had left Sion House by midsummer of that year, for his boyish handwriting may still be seen in the entrance-book of the head master of Eton under the date July 29, 1804. The tall, handsome, courteous, dignified gentleman, wearing eighteenth-century costume, with wig newly dressed each morning, conservative in all his thoughts and ways, in whose presence Shelley, not yet quite twelve years old, stood while he signed his name, was Dr. Goodall, who held the head mastership from 1802 until he was elected provost in 1809. An excellent scholar, a gracious gentleman, of joyous temper and genial wit, there was lacking in Goodall some of that sterner stuff which goes to make up a vigorous ruler. The sterner stuff was to be found superabundantly in Dr. Keate, master of the Lower School when Shelley entered, who succeeded Goodall in the place of supreme authority a year before Shelley went to Oxford. The moral contrast was not greater than the visible and material one between the two masters. Little more than five feet high, and not very great in girth,

\* Tredcroft lost his health and died at an early age. If Shelley's boy-friendship could be assigned to the Eton years, his friend might possibly be Halliday or Price. It seems more likely that Shelley would have named "eleven or twelve" as his age in thinking of Sion House Academy than in thinking of Eton, with which he can have had few or no associations before the beginning of his thirteenth year.

was Keate, but there was concentrated within this space, says CHAP. I. the author of "Eöthen," "the pluck of ten battalions." The 1792-1810. small, combative-looking figure, arrayed in the gown of a doctor of divinity, the face strongly outlined as in living granite, and surmounted by the venerable "wind-cutter," or cocked-hat, seemed a quaint emblem expressing authority and force. His manner was harsh and dictatorial, as, in his belief, a schoolmaster's ought to be. His red, shaggy eyebrows were awful to confront, and he possessed the peculiar power of using these outjutting eyebrows as pointers, with which he could indicate any object towards which he wished to direct attention.\* The flogging-block was an altar at which Keate devoutly officiated as high priest. His name the boys derived from χέω, I shed; ἄρν, woe. On one occasion he executed justice—by anticipation—on eighty culprits, working with decision and dexterity until long past midnight; † on another, according to the legend, the names of certain candidates for confirmation were sent up to him on a slip of paper identical in form with the flogging-bills, and duly signed with the assistant-master's name. Keate, not to be defrauded of victims, himself exercised the laying-on of hands, but in a novel fashion. Yet he is said to have had a kindly side, most often shown when out of office; he could be courteous to his equals; he was certainly an excellent scholar, and an admirable teacher; an upright and honourable man. "We must not hold lightly," writes with legitimate pride a sometime pupil, "the man who has flogged half the ministers, secretaries, bishops, generals, and dukes of the present century."

Shelley's tutor, an assistant-master, was a very magnificent

\* Kinglake, "Eöthen," chap. xviii.

† Commemorating which event the present Dean Goulburn wrote, as a boy, in the *Kaleidoscope* a new version of Campbell's "Hohenlinden"—

"Then cleft the room with screeches riven,  
Then rushed the boys to flogging driven,  
And louder than the wind of heaven  
Far flew the buds quite terribly."

CHAP. I. person, but, though kind and good-humoured, unluckily the  
1792-1810. dullest man in Eton—George Bethell. He is remembered by his famous comment on a classical text. "Postes æratos," read a boy at construing—"brazen gates." "Yes," interrupted Bethell, "that is right; probably so called because they were made of brass." In after-years "Botch Bethell," as he was nicknamed,\* became vice-provost. His turgid and verbose sermons, and the trick he had of saying "the which," still afflict the memory of listeners. His style has been happily hit off in the couplet—

"Didactic, dry, declamatory, dull,  
Big blustering Bethell bellows like a bull."

A jolly-looking, stout, rubicund old gentleman, with a hooked nose, and a voice that sounded always a mouthful of noise, Vice-Provost Bethell remained dull Bethell to the end. Once in Upper School an excellent speaker was declaiming Mercutio's "Queen Mab;" when he uttered the lines—

"And sometime comes she with a tithe-pig's tail  
Tickling a parson's nose as 'a lies asleep"—

his voice and delivery so exactly reproduced those of Bethell that an explosion of laughter followed, in which Bethell, quite unaware of the cause of mirth, joined as heartily as the rest.

The old house in which Shelley boarded as a pupil of Bethell was pulled down in 1863; it stood just behind the lime-trees which face the railing now to be seen in front of the new schools. To the last, his room, which was over Bethell's study, was identified by tradition.† But, at his entrance, Shelley resided with Mr. Hexter, the professor of pothooks and hangers. Hexter had the honour of being, not only an Eton writing-master and a "dame," but also a magistrate of the county and a major in the militia; yet his thirst for glory was unsatisfied

\* So named because in correcting Latin verses he used to foist in pompous phrases, known technically as "botches."

† The last occupant of the house was the Rev. W. Wayte.

—he longed to wear, like the assistant-masters, a college gown. CHAP. I.  
 “Hector” the boys nicknamed this learned Trojan. “Major, 1792-1810.  
 will you mend my pen?” was an often-repeated request which charmed them by its pacific-martial incongruity.

In some respects Shelley’s life at Eton was but a continuation of his life at Sion House Academy, only that five hundred boys surrounded him instead of sixty. An ordinary mortal would have learnt what is called experience; he would have parted with some of his singularity, practised the art of making concessions, held his better self in reserve and kept his secret; or he would have learnt that there is a time for all things—a time to cringe and a time to bully, a time to fag and a time to be a fag-master. Shelley was inaccessible to such lessons of experience; he remained what he was, or advanced upon lines of his own. “He stood apart from the whole school,” wrote a contemporary at Eton; “a being never to be forgotten.” Refusing obedience to the orders of his fag-master, Matthews (afterwards known as author of the “Diary of an Invalid”), and proclaiming war against the fagging system, which seemed to him an organized tyranny, he could hardly expect protection, should occasion for their intervention arise, from the elder lads of the same form as Matthews, among whom were Milman, and John Coleridge, and Sumner,\* and Nassau Senior. He stood convicted as a rebel against authority; while to boys of his own standing, except a few chosen friends, his refusing to join in the common sports, his shyness, his singularity, his careless attire, his interest in strange studies, his gentleness united with an unusual excitability of temper, pointed him out as a proper victim on whom to wreak all the exuberance of their animal spirits. Singly they dared not attack “Mad Shelley;” there still was in him something dangerous which their wisdom feared; a point might be reached when he would

\* Sumner, afterwards Bishop of Winchester. The future Archbishop Sumner was an assistant-master. In the sixth form in 1805 were Sir Stratford Canning, afterwards Lord Stratford de Redcliffe; Lonsdale, afterwards Bishop of Lichfield; and Hawtrey, afterwards Provost of Eton.

CHAP. I. lose all self-control, and might be maddened to some insensate  
 1792-1810. violence. Once in such a paroxysm of rage he seized the nearest weapon, a fork, and struck it into the hand of his tormentor; \* but as a rule, we are assured by his class-mate, Packe, a matter-of-fact observer, he would not deign to pursue the pestering cowards, or resent their molestation, rather being always ready to assist their stupidity when they came to him with petitions for help in their tasks. Herded together they felt secure. Sometimes he could escape by flight, and before he was lost sight of the gamesome youths would have chased him in full cry and have enjoyed the sport of a "Shelley-bait" up town. At other times escape was impossible, and then he became desperate. "I have seen him," wrote a schoolfellow, "surrounded, hooted, baited like a maddened bull, and at this distance of time I seem to hear ringing in my ears the cry which Shelley was wont to utter in his paroxysm of revengeful anger." In dark and miry winter evenings it was the practice to assemble under the cloisters previous to mounting to the Upper School. To surround "Mad Shelley" and "nail" him with a ball slimy with mud was a favourite pastime; or his name would suddenly be sounded through the cloisters, in an instant to be taken up by another and another voice, until hundreds joined in the clamour, and the roof would echo and re-echo with "Shelley! Shelley! Shelley!" then a space would be opened, in which, as in a ring or alley, the victim must stand and exhibit his torture; or some urchin would dart in behind and by one dexterous push scatter at Shelley's feet the books which he had held under his arm; or mischievous hands would pluck at his garments; or a hundred fingers would point at him from every side, while still the outcry, "Shelley! Shelley!" rang against the walls. An access of passion—the desired result—would follow which, declares a

\* "I have often heard our Shelley relate the story of stabbing an upper boy with a fork. . . . He always described it, in my hearing, as an almost involuntary act, done on the spur of anguish, and that he made the stab as the boy was going out of the room" (Mrs. Shelley to Leigh Hunt, April 8, 1825).

witness of these persecutions, "made his eyes flash like a tiger's, his cheeks grow pale as death, his limbs quiver." CHAP. I.  
1792-1810.

Yet it would be an error to suppose that Shelley lived in isolation, or had no happy hours and days at Eton. In public events of the little world he bore his part. The years 1805 and 1808 were made glorious by the Montem processions; on the first of these occasions, Shelley, dressed in blue jacket, white trousers, silk stockings and pumps, the uniform of a midshipman, and bearing the wand of his office, assisted in the ceremony at Salt Hill as pole-bearer; at the second Montem, being a fifth-form boy, he walked as full corporal, Lord Sondes by his side, and his own pole-bearers attending.\* Two years later, just before he left Eton, he pronounced a speech of Cicero against Catiline on Election Monday, July 30, before his compeers in oratory. He boated, and it is said even took part in a regatta.† His schoolfellow, Captain Gronow, declares that once Shelley appeared in the pugilistic ring, duly supported by bottle-holders and backers; he describes the tall, slender, unfledged poet, skillless in the use of his arms, stalking around the lists and reciting in the verse of Homer defiant speeches of the heroes of Troy; and the story ends with the account of a divine panic which descended upon Shelley—dauntlessly courageous in all ascertained instances save this—upon discovery of the fell uses to which well-trained fists may be applied.‡ That Shelley earned the good-will of several among

\* Shelley's name appears in the printed Montem lists of 1805 and 1808. When he came to Eton he was placed in the upper fourth form. In 1805, he was in the remove; in 1808, in the upper fifth; and when leaving, in 1810, in the sixth form.

† His friend Halliday says that Shelley never boated while at Eton, but words of Amos imply the contrary, and Medwin speaks of the regatta (1809), at which he states that he was himself present, and Shelley "assisted." Medwin also asserts that, when a schoolboy at Brentford, Shelley boated. "At Brentford we had more than once played the truant and rowed to Kew, and once to Richmond, where we saw Mrs. Jordan in the 'Country Girl' at that theatre, the first Shelley had ever visited."

‡ Gronow was considerably junior to Shelley in the school, and his statement that he was Shelley's "friend and associate" at Eton may not mean a great deal. He writes, "Shelley was a boy of studious and meditative habits, averse



CHAP. I. his schoolfellows cannot be doubted; but his intimate friends  
 1792-1810. were few.\* For a time Amos (afterwards a distinguished barrister) was one of these. In Hexter's house there were only three lower boys, Shelley, Amos, and another. The three messed together. "Shelley and I," wrote Mr. Amos, "used to amuse ourselves in composing plays and acting them before the lower boy, who constituted our sole audience. Shelley entered with great vivacity into this amusement." Packe, an excellent but matter-of-fact young gentleman, possessing little in common with Shelley, was, like him, a pupil of Bethell's, and sat near him in school. "I always liked him," says Mr. Packe; "he was such a good, generous, open-hearted fellow." But no one seems to have been nearer to Shelley's heart than the younger of two brothers Halliday, whose gentleness, delicacy of feeling, and romantic fancy were the grounds of a tender attachment. "Many a long and happy walk have I had with him," wrote

to all games and sports, and a great reader of novels and romances. He was a thin, slight lad, with remarkably lustrous eyes, fine hair, and a very peculiar shrill voice and laugh. His most intimate friend at Eton was a boy named Price, who was considered one of the best classical scholars amongst us" ("Recollections," etc., p. 154, ed. 1864).

\* The Rev. Robert J. Leslie, of Holbeach, informs me that his father, the Rev. Edward Leslie, Rector of Dromore, possessed certain handsome folio copies of Scott's poems (probably "The Lay," "Marmion," and "The Lady of the Lake") presented to him at Eton, with an inscription in each: "Edward Leslie, from his affectionate friend, Percy Bysshe Shelley." Mr. Leslie writes, "I suppose that at Eton my father was Shelley's best and dearest friend; the one who appreciated his genius more than any other boy except Charles Ball. . . . They were in the same house, as were also Ball and Lord Howe. . . . Shelley and my father were both suspected of having put a bull-dog into Dr. Keate's desk. . . . but in or about 1814 my father was dining with Lord Howe in Leicestershire, when this old story came up. A gentleman present, I forget his name, then avowed himself the author of the plot never revealed, and said he had no confederates. Shelley used to be fond of composing poems and dramas, and the boys often invited him to rehearse these productions with a mock interest, and then, just when he thought the audience were thoroughly enraptured, burst out into fits of laughter. Though the trick had been played him frequently, he still could always be easily induced to incur its repetition. . . . My father often tried to console him. . . . I have heard him speak, with tears in his eyes, of 'Poor dear Shelley! it was no wonder that he went wrong.' My father himself engaged in the general amusements largely, being strong and active; but Shelley wandered alone, generally with a book, for hours together, day after day, learning verses or composing them."

Mr. Halliday, "in the beautiful neighbourhood of dear old CHAP. I.  
 Eton. I was a delighted and willing listener to his marvellous <sup>1792-1810.</sup>  
 stories of fairy-land, and apparitions, and spirits, and haunted  
 ground; and his speculations were then (for his mind was far  
 more developed than mine) of the world beyond the grave.  
 Another of his favourite rambles was Stoke Park, and the  
 picturesque churchyard where Gray is said to have written his  
 "Elegy," of which he was very fond. I was myself far too  
 young to form any estimate of character, but I loved Shelley  
 for his kindness and affectionate ways; he was not made to  
 endure the rough and boisterous pastime at Eton, and his shy  
 and gentle nature was glad to escape far away to muse over  
 strange fancies. . . . He certainly was not happy at Eton, for  
 his was a disposition that needed especial personal superin-  
 tendence, to watch and cherish and direct all his noble aspira-  
 tions, and the remarkable tenderness of his heart. He had  
 great moral courage, and feared nothing but what was base and  
 false and low." Rambles amid lovely prospects of river and  
 wood, where Milton had paused to view the towers and battle-  
 ments of Windsor "bosomed high in tufted trees," where Gray  
 had mused and meditated, where Walton had helped the Provost  
 of Eton to catch a dish of trout, while honest Maudlin moved  
 singing through the fields—rambles in which Shelley could  
 pour forth all his thoughts and imaginings for a sympathetic  
 listener, must have made happy oases in the weary weeks and  
 days. "After six" on summer evenings, the interval before  
 "lock up" at eight, yielded two blissful hours to lower boys,  
 when Shelley, with some chosen friend, would escape, and  
 in some soft sylvan or pastoral nook enjoy a schoolboy feast.  
 Long afterwards, when gliding with his friend Williams in his  
 boat upon the Serchio, he remembered such happy evenings  
 near the Thames—

"Those bottles of warm tea—  
 (Give me some straw)—must be stowed tenderly;  
 Such as we used, in summer after six,

CHAP. I.  
1792-1810.

To cram in great-coat pockets, and to mix  
Hard eggs and radishes and rolls at Eton,  
And, couched on stolen hay in those green harbours  
Farmers called gaps, and we schoolboys called arbours,  
Would feast till eight."\*

Shelley at Eton became an eager and wide-ranging, if not an exact classical, scholar. The first master he was "up to" in school, Ben Drury, was the Admirable Crichton of his day, a lover of pleasure, as well as an admirable scholar, who would drive up in dashing curricule to town on Saturday evening to visit the theatre and make a night of it. Drury would have discovered whatever grace or originality may have been possessed by Shelley's Latin verses, which, we are told, he wrote with extraordinary facility. Bethell had ears only for false quantities. Into the fire went the exercises, without one word of guidance or encouragement; "the quantities were false," and false quantities, it must be admitted, though a Shelley's, do not enhance the charm of modern sapphics or alcaics. Shelley rose steadily from form to form; his lessons, declares Halliday, "were child's play to him." He grasped the contents of a page with a few swift and searching glances, and what interested him became a portion of himself, never to be lost or forgotten. But perhaps Shelley's most important studies at Eton were those of his own choice, and not of compulsion. The grandeur of the verse of Lucretius and his daring conceptions held him as with a potent spell. Among writers in English, Franklin delighted him with his announcement of the victories of mind over matter; already he felt the strong compulsion of Godwin's doctrines in the "Political Justice." With Condorcet he dreamed of the endless progress of the race and of human perfectibility. He translated in his leisure hours several books of Pliny's "Natural History," being especially impressed by the chapter "De Deo," in which the Roman philosopher censures superstitious myths of the loves and wars

\* Poetical Works of Shelley, vol. iv. p. 115 (ed. Forman).

of anthropomorphic deities. "I suppose therefore that to seeke CHAP. I. after any shape of God"—thus old Philemon Holland trans- 1792-1810. lates the Latin—"and to assigne a forme and image to him, bewraieth man's weaknesse. For God, whosoever he be (if haply there be any other but the very world) and in what part residant, all sense he is, all sight, all hearing: he is all life, all soule, all of himselfe. . . . Now, that the soveraigne power and deity, whatsoever it is, should have regard of mankind is a toy and vanity worthy to be laughed at"—where the good Philemon makes a marginal note of warning: "Here let Christians take heed, and be thankfull to God for the light revealed unto them out of the holy scriptures." Possibly it was his devotion to such writers as Pliny and Lucretius that earned for Shelley the title of "Atheist" from his school-fellows; a term, says Hogg, applied in Eton to the most daring revolter against the higher powers of the school, and having no theological reference, but of which no trace as used in such a sense can now be discovered in the shifting Etonian dialect.\*

Shelley's awakened interest in science—more, perhaps, a thing of the imagination than the reason—continued vivid and grew perilously energetic during the Eton years. Here again the Windermere philosopher, old Walker, exhibited his wonders before the eager-eyed spectator; here again, when Shelley watched the stars, he dreamed of their nobler denizens and of the relation of rolling orb to orb. "Night," says a schoolfellow, "was his jubilee." He launched his fire-balloons on errands to the sky. He borrowed forbidden books on chemistry.† When he returned in the holidays to Field

\* Shelley named Amos "Apurist," one indifferent to fire, when his friend ceased to take an interest in chemistry and electricity. Possibly "Apurist" may have been a retort for the title "Atheist." The Vice-Provost of Eton, the Rev. G. Dupuis, for four years a schoolfellow of Shelley's, had no recollection of the name "Atheist" having been applied to Shelley, but remembered "Mad Shelley, who went without a hat."

† Medwin writes, "I have before me two notes from his father to mine, written in 1808. Shelley had sent for some book on chemistry, which happened to be in my father's library, but which fell into the hands of his tutor and was sent back.

CHAP. I. Place, it was with face and hands smudged and stained by  
 1792-1810. explosive powders and virulent acids; evidence of the young  
 physicist's industry might also be seen in many a spot and  
 streak on those pretty white frocks in which his assistants  
 and admirers had stood around his table, gladly beguiled into  
 the Hall Chamber, Bysshe's room, to witness their brother's  
 mysterious experiments. In Hexter's house he brewed strange  
 and fiery liquids; and as he ran nimbly upstairs, might be  
 heard singing cheerily the chorus of Shakespeare's concocters  
 of hell-broth—

“Double, double, toil and trouble;  
 Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.”

Once, it is said, he nearly blew up himself and his quill-driving “dame;” once he half poisoned himself with some arsenical mixture, or believed that such was the case; and there is still shown at the northernmost point of the South Meadow a willow stump which, with burning-glass and gunpowder, Shelley had set ablaze.\* Walker's attendant had picked up some of his master's skill, and gained an honest penny by selling small electrical machines to the schoolboys. Shelley was a delighted purchaser, and a little later became possessed of a galvanic battery. One day Mr. Bethell, suspecting from strange noises overhead that his pupil was engaged in nefarious scientific pursuits, suddenly appeared in Shelley's room; to his consternation he found the culprit apparently half enveloped in a blue flame. “What on earth are you doing, Shelley?” “Please, sir,” came the answer in the quietest tone, “I am raising the devil.” “And what in the world is this?” resumed the pedagogue, seizing hold of some mysterious-looking apparatus on the table. In an instant the Sir Timothy says, ‘I have returned the book on chemistry, as it is a forbidden thing at Eton.’” As to astronomy, possibly Shelley got peeps through Herschel's great telescope at Slough: the younger Herschel was for a short time an Eton schoolboy.

\* The alleged identification of the tree was probably made in comparatively recent years, in order to give the story greater precision.

intruder was thrown back—Bethell the magnificent—against CHAP. I. the wall, having undesignedly exhibited a very pretty electrical 1792-1810. experiment, and received an unstinted discharge. It is said that the experiment did not advance Shelley in his tutor's good graces.\*

What may be termed the romantic side of science had a peculiar fascination for Shelley. Of the best training which science affords the intellect he had little or none; he was impatient or incapable of mathematical studies; careful and well-directed experiment, the prudent interrogation of nature, the slow and cautious processes of induction, were unknown to him; hence he passed readily and with ease from the wonder-world of fact to the wonder-world of imagination. The science of Albertus Magnus and Paracelsus was almost as serviceable for his purposes as the science of Priestley and Davy;† the virtues that lurk in plants and minerals, as they were once conceived, what are these but translated into new equivalents by our modern chemistry? Why should not the substances that form gold exist in all metals? Why should it be impossible to discover the panacea and the elixir of life? He pored on books that treated of magic and witchcraft; he knew the spell by which to summon up a ghost; he planned, when at his father's dwelling, how to get admission by night to the vault or charnel-house of Warnham Church; he might indeed

\* I follow Mr. Packe's account of this incident as that of a contemporary of Shelley; another version represents Shelley as crying, "Stop, sir!" in an attempt to save Bethell; while a third—a fragment of the Shelley myth—tells of his having connected the door-handle with his machine, and then made noises with the intention of bringing his tutor upstairs. There are various versions also of the willow-tree incident. That given above is derived from Hogg. Medwin tells of an electrical kite, intended to draw lightning from the clouds, which Shelley used to fly when at Field Place. The Bishop of Down and Connor tells me the story, which he heard from the Rev. Edward Leslie, of a successful attempt to electrify a tom-cat, Leslie holding the subject of the experiment while Shelley managed the wires.

† Shelley, in a letter to Godwin, says, "I . . . pored over the reveries of Albertus Magnus and Paracelsus, the former of which I read in Latin, and probably gained more knowledge of that language from that source than from all the discipline of Eton" (Hogg's "Life of Shelley," ii. p. 125).

CHAP. I. have been engaged in raising the devil when Mr. Bethell 1792-1810. broke into his solitary chamber.

One living mage Shelley actually found in the immediate neighbourhood of Eton. Dr. Lind, of Windsor, had been in early life surgeon to an East Indiaman; while a wanderer in strange lands he had brought together a remarkable collection of Eastern curiosities. With these and his handsome wife, as tall as himself and six times as stout, he had settled in Windsor, and was well known to the court and to court ladies. He was a man of remarkable sweetness and gentleness of disposition, yet one who asserted his right to think in ways of his own. With his love of Eastern wonders and his taste for "tricks, conundrums, and queer things," says Madame D'Arblay, people were afraid of his trying experiments with their constitutions, and "thought him a better conjuror than physician." Twenty years before Shelley came to Eton, Dr. Lind discoursed to Miss Hamilton on air-balloons, and told with glee of a rebellion in the school, when the boys, driven to desperation, destroyed the whipping-post and set authority at defiance.\* It looked as if nature had fashioned and trained him to become in old age the white-haired, venerable friend of such an inspired boy as Shelley. The relation seems to have been a wholly beautiful one;† on this

\* "Autobiography and Correspondence of Mrs. Delany" (2nd ser.), vol. iii.; "Extracts from the Diary of Miss Hamilton," vol. i., December 12, 1783.

† Wholly beautiful, unless we accept as true a statement of Hogg's that Shelley when at Oxford had by heart, and once recited by request, for the delectation of former schoolfellows, an elaborate form of anathema—execrations grotesquely piled up—directed against the two supreme powers, King George and Sir Timothy. "Why, you young reprobate," exclaimed Hogg, "who taught you to curse your father—your own father?" "My grandfather, Sir Bysshe, partly; but principally my friend, Dr. Lind, at Eton." The fulmination, if ever delivered, was of course not seriously meant; but there are limits imposed by good feeling and good taste to the freaks of grotesque mirth, and if Shelley thus erred, he would in later years have joined with us in condemning his boyish self. That Shelley in early years had a sincere affection for his father appears from what is related further on. As to Dr. Lind, some anonymous writer inserted a manuscript note in a copy of Hogg's "Life of Shelley," between pp. 138 and 139, which Mr. Garnett now possesses. The note is as follows:—"This statement is totally false. Dr. Lind was an ultra-loyalist and devotedly attached to

side, the tall, spare figure of the physician—"lean as a lath," CHAP. I. says Dr. Burney—still light of foot, hoary-headed, with eyes <sup>1792-1810.</sup> undimmed by years, gleaming under aged brows; on the other, the illuminated face of an eager stripling; on this side, age and experience, undulled by custom or the enfeebling touch of time; on the other, all the wonder, desire, and hope of a young and winged spirit. Once, in the holidays, when Shelley was recovering from a fever which had attacked his brain, tidings came to him through a servant of some half-formed intention of his father's to send him to a private madhouse. Instantly an express was despatched by the distracted boy to his kind friend at Windsor. Dr. Lind arrived, and by his authority, his expostulations, and his menaces turned Sir Timothy from his purpose.\* Never did Shelley mention Dr. Lind's name in after-years, writes Mary Shelley, without love and veneration. We know too little of this fine spirit; and yet we know much, for he lives in Shelley's verse as the old hermit who liberates Laon from the dizzy platform on which he stood enchained until his brain reeled and maddened, who bears the youth to that curious chamber strewn with rarest sea-shells and tapestried with moss, where the sage had gathered many a wise tome, and tends him there until Laon's wildered brain is soothed and healed.

"In the deep

The shape of an old man did then appear,

Stately and beautiful; that dreadful sleep

His heavenly smiles dispersed, and I could wake and weep."

Nor is the record of this perfect friendship between old and

George III.; he was, too, a man of such remarkable sweetness and gentleness of disposition that he was never known throughout his long life to make an unkind remark of any human being. It will be contradicted in the third volume, and entirely withdrawn in the next edition of the work. Mr. Shelley must either have been hoaxing Mr. Hogg, or else labouring under a delusion." From this note it would appear that Hogg had admitted to the writer that he had erred, and would correct the error in a second edition.

\* Hogg suggests that Shelley was under a delusion with respect to his father, and had not yet fully recovered from the dreams of fever.



CHAP. I. young less beautiful as we find it in the fragment "Prince  
1792-1810. Athanase," written not long before Shelley set forth on his  
last voyage to the Continent. The prince, a youth of gentle  
yet aspiring mind—

"Just, innocent; with varied learning fed"—

is saddened by the spectacle of the world, and by some hidden  
grief; so that he grows strange to men, until "some said that  
he was mad." Yet he is not quite solitary.

"Prince Athanase had one beloved friend;

An old, old man, with hair of silver white,  
And lips where heavenly smiles would hang and blend  
With his wise words, and eyes whose arrowy light  
Shone like the reflex of a thousand minds.

Such was Zonoras; and as daylight finds

One amaranth glittering on the path of frost  
When autumn nights have nipped all weaker kinds,  
Thus through his age, dark, cold, and tempest-tossed,  
Shone truth upon Zonoras; and he filled

From fountains pure, nigh overgrown and lost,  
The spirit of Prince Athanase, a child,

With soul-sustaining songs of ancient lore,  
And philosophic wisdom, clear and mild;

And sweet and subtle talk they evermore  
The pupil and the master shared."

Ariel has indeed illuminated and touched with enchantment  
the figure of this benignant Prospero of his prime.

Such were the main influences which went to mould the  
mind of Shelley in boyhood. While gaining the usual equip-  
ment of classical erudition from his teachers, he had himself  
started forward into untried and perilous ways of speculation  
and of fantasy. In the dawn of a century which science and  
democracy have claimed as their own, he moves a figure of  
the dawn, with the mists still around him, yet struck by the  
first rays of the rising sun. His interest in science connected  
itself on the one hand with free speculation in the regions of

religion and of politics, and on the other hand with a world of imaginative wonder and romance. His chief friends were books, and perhaps among these the most influential was Godwin's "Political Justice." It supplied him with a ready-made creed, apparently based upon morality and reason, and Shelley became forthwith a preacher and propagandist of revolutionary ideas in his little world of Eton. "I was twice expelled," he wrote at a later time to Godwin, "but recalled by the interference of my father;" and it is likely enough that a boy who raised the devil and fired the willow-tree might get into grave trouble when seniority in the school would seem to render his aberrations less excusable. No favourite with the masters, flouted and tormented, even when in the higher forms, by the swarm of his schoolfellows, his mind pursued its own solitary paths. But he did not grow to be a young misanthrope; he eagerly longed for sympathy, and if he failed to find it, he sought consolation in some dream of ideal love.

With such a spirit and in such a life as Shelley's habitual influences and periods of development may count for much, but now and again comes some shining moment, one and infinite, which does more than the work of years. Now it darts its arrowy summons to the brain, now to the conscience or to the heart, and of a sudden an intellectual or moral revolution has been initiated. The experiences of two such miraculous moments coming to Shelley in boyhood may be found recorded in his verse. It was almost certainly at Sion House Academy—not at Eton—that in a moment of time the revelation came to him of the misery of the oppressors and the oppressed in the world in which he lived and moved, of the misery of his own extravagant and impotent rages; and with this discovery arose the resolve henceforth to be wise and gentle, and just and free.

"Thoughts of great deeds were mine, dear Friend, when first  
The clouds which wrap this world from youth did pass.

CHAP. I.  
1792-1810.

I do remember well the hour which burst  
My spirit's sleep. A fresh May-dawn it was,  
When I walked forth upon the glittering grass,  
And wept, I knew not why: until there rose  
From the near schoolroom voices that, alas!  
Were but one echo from a world of woes—  
The harsh and grating strife of tyrants and of foes.

“And then I clasped my hands and looked around;  
But none was near to mock my streaming eyes  
Which poured their warm drops on the sunny ground.  
So, without shame, I spake: ‘I will be wise,  
And just and free, and mild, if in me lies  
Such power; for I grow weary to behold  
The selfish and the strong still tyrannize  
Without reproach or check.’ I then controlled  
My tears, my heart grew calm, and I was meek and bold.

“And from that hour did I with earnest thought  
Heap knowledge from forbidden mines of lore;  
Yet nothing that my tyrants knew or taught  
I cared to learn—but from that secret store  
Wrought linked armour for my soul, before  
It might walk forth to war among mankind.  
Thus power and hope were strengthened more and more  
Within me.” \*

To dedicate himself to noble purposes, to be neither oppressor nor oppressed—it was an exalted and generous vow. So highly strung, so passionate a nature as Shelley's, could not in a moment attain the wisdom and the gentleness towards which he aspired; but this was a turning-point, and much, if not all, was attained before the close.†

\* The description of the grass near the schoolroom cannot belong to Eton.

† Had Shelley lived in the seventeenth instead of the nineteenth century, the oppressors of this world might have troubled his spirit less than the Heavenly Tyrant of Calvinist theology. An incident which took place at Eton two hundred years previously may be compared or contrasted with this incident of Shelley's vow. Henry More, the Platonist, writes, “On a certain day, in a ground belonging to Eton College, where the boys used to play and exercise themselves, musing concerning these things with myself, and recalling to my

The inspiration of this memorable moment was to elevate CHAP. I. and purify Shelley's moral being; but what if his imagination <sup>1792-1810.</sup> were still held in bondage by the fascination of superstitious fancies and nightmares of gross or vulgar horror? His imagination also needed to be purified. To dedicate his moral being to justice, gentleness, and freedom, it was the first thing needful; but it was hardly less essential that he should dedicate his imagination to the spirit of beauty. This also was accomplished—accomplished almost involuntarily on Shelley's part, and in a moment of time. We read the record of this second spiritual crisis in the "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty." Like the former discovery of moral truth, this unveiling of intellectual loveliness came on a morning of springtime.

"While yet a boy I sought for ghosts, and sped  
 Through many a listening chamber, cave, and ruin,  
 And starlight wood, with fearful steps pursuing  
 Hopes of high talk with the departed dead.  
 I called on poisonous names with which our youth is fed.  
 I was not heard, I saw them not;  
 When, musing deeply on the lot  
 Of life, at that sweet time when winds are wooing  
 All vital things that wake to bring  
 News of birds and blossoming,  
 Sudden thy shadow fell on me:—  
 I shrieked and clasped my hands in ecstasy!

"I vowed that I would dedicate my powers  
 To thee and thine: have I not kept the vow?"

These two moments were the consecration of Shelley's mind this doctrine of Calvin, I did thus seriously and deliberately conclude within myself, viz. 'If I am of those that are predestinated unto Hell, where all things are full of nothing but cursing and blasphemy, yet will I behave myself there patiently and submissively towards God; and if there be any one thing more than another that is acceptable unto him, that will I set myself to do with a sincere heart, and to the utmost of my power.' . . . Which meditation of mine is as firmly fixed in my memory, and the very place where I stood, as if the thing had been transacted but a day or two ago" (Ward's "Life of Henry More" (1710), pp. 6, 7).

CHAP. I. boyhood. Errors of action, errors of opinion, may justly be  
 1792-1810. laid to his charge; but, as year followed year, while forfeiting  
 neither his freedom nor his courage, and making no ignoble  
 concessions to the world, he grew more gentle in his freedom,  
 and wiser in his love. Never after the years of boyhood did  
 his imagination cloud itself with the gross stimulants of  
 mindless wonder, and horror unallied with beauty. Other  
 poets have more faithfully represented the concrete facts of  
 the world, the characters of many men, the infinite variety of  
 human passions. No other poet has pursued with such  
 breathless speed on such aerial heights the spirit of ideal  
 beauty. On that spring morning of self-dedication a seed  
 put up a tender shoot, and in after years the fruit was plucked  
 in the "Prometheus" and the "Adonais." Courageously Shelley  
 might make his demand, "Have I not kept the vow?"

NOTE.—It will be seen from the above that I do not accept as right Mr. Forman's  
 view when he says, with reference to the stanzas quoted from the "Hymn to Intel-  
 lectual Beauty," "There can be but little doubt that these two stanzas (5 and 6)  
 have reference to the same awakening of Shelley's spirit to its sublime mission,  
 referred to in another passage of like autobiographic value, namely, stanzas 3, 4,  
 and 5 of the dedication to 'Laon and Cythna.'" The one crisis seems to me  
 essentially moral, the other intellectual and imaginative.

The following stanzas by Moultrie are worth quoting as a picture of Shelley  
 at Eton by an Etonian of a little later date:—

"Years came and went; beside the Poet's tomb  
 The flowers of many a spring had bloomed and died,  
 When times of fierce convulsion, rage, and gloom  
 Arose and shook the nations far and wide.  
 Oh then, my Mother, by the verdant side  
 Of thy bright river, lost in dreamy mood,  
 Was seen a stripling pale and lustrous-eyed  
 Who far apart his lonely path pursued,  
 And seemed in sullen guise o'er troublous thoughts to brood.

"Small sympathy he owned or felt, I ween,  
 With sports or pastimes of his young compeers,  
 Nor mingling in their studies oft was seen,  
 Nor shared their joys or sorrows, hopes or fears:  
 Pensive he was and grave beyond his years,  
 And happiest seemed when in some shady nook  
 (His wild sad eyes suffused with silent tears)

O'er some mysterious and forbidden book  
He pored, until his frame with strong emotion shook.

CHAP. I.  
1792-1810.

"Strange were his studies, and his sports no less.  
Full oft, beneath the blazing summer noon,  
The sun's convergent rays, with dire address,  
He turned on some old tree and burnt it soon  
To ashes: oft at eve the fire-balloon,  
Inflated by his skill, would mount on high;  
And when tempestuous clouds had hid the moon,  
And lightning rent and thunder shook the sky,  
He left his bed to gaze on Nature's revelry."

Several subsequent stanzas continue the view of Shelley at Eton. The reader who can do so might well consult a privately printed volume of sermons by Dr. Hawtrey, Provost of Eton, in one of which he speaks with admirable feeling of the injury done to delicate and sensitive spirits by bullying and tyranny, citing the examples of Shelley and W. Sidney Walker.

Some years ago a subscription was begun by Mr. Oscar Browning, then a master at Eton, to purchase a bust of Shelley and place it in the Upper School among the Eton worthies. The subscription list had reached a considerable amount when the Provost of Eton, Dr. Goodford, refused to allow a bust of Shelley to be placed in the Upper School.

I have found some amusing sketches of Eton schoolboy life in Shelley's time in a privately printed volume, somewhat difficult to procure, "Reminiscences of Eton. By an Etonian" (Chichester; printed for the author: 1831). The author, H. C. Blake, was a schoolfellow of Shelley's, but the book contains no reference to Shelley that I can discover.

●

## CHAPTER II.

## OXFORD.\*

CHAP. II. EIGHTEEN hundred and ten, the year in which he removed from Eton to Oxford, was one of the most joyous periods of Shelley's life, until the closing days of that year were darkened by the shadow of disappointed love. It was a happiness to pass from the gregarious school-life and such rigorous discipline as that of Keate to the freedom and seclusion of college chambers. During 1810 Shelley's bodily health seems to have been unusually good, and his spirits unusually buoyant. In the Christmas vacation, 1809-10, he walked the Sussex fields and woods with vigorous step, a gun upon his shoulder, his cousin Medwin by his side. Mr. Timothy Shelley was a keen sportsman, and his son did not now abhor that recreation which in More's "Utopia" is left to be the employment of butchers; he was an excellent shot, exciting his cousin's envy by his successful practice made against the snipes of Field Place pond. The stimulating air and bright skies and stirring of the blood quickened his brain and set his tongue agoing. "On such days," says Medwin, "Shelley's spirits used to run riot; his 'sweet and subtle

\* At the opening of this chapter I wish to acknowledge how largely the portion of my life of Shelley which tells of his residence at Oxford is indebted to Hogg's papers on Shelley at Oxford, reprinted in his "Life of Shelley." I have throughout endeavoured, as far as possible, to retain the words of Hogg, while reducing the scale of the narrative chiefly by omission of what does not relate to Shelley.

talk' was to me inebriating and electric."\* Later in the year hope spanned with a double rainbow the interval between Eton and Oxford—first the hope of a youthful poet and romancer, and above and beyond this the brighter but more uncertain iris of a lover's hope.

CHAP. II.  
Apr. 1810—  
Mar. 1811.

It is curious to note how, from very early days, Shelley, with no literary surroundings or traditions, aspired to authorship. All through his life he was more impelled than other men by inward forces—his own ideas and emotions, whether native or those which he had eagerly caught up and made his own; and perhaps less with him than with other men were these modified or retarded by slow accretions of experience. With Shelley to possess an idea was in general to carry that idea to its logical issues in action; to conceive a design was to endeavour to realize that design in the world of material fact. His whole being must form a vital unity; the balancings and falterings of a divided nature were unknown or were intolerable to him. He possessed a practical talent which was instantly put in the service of a genius eminently unsuited for practice in this work-a-day world. Being urged as a boy by his own fervid thoughts or fancies to give them utterance in prose or verse, he must forthwith put them in a book and present that book to the world. He lived intensely in his own imaginings, wise or idle, beautiful or feebly extravagant, and was insensible to those checks of common sense which come from a power of passing in and out of our own imaginings, and seeing many things, even imperfectly, at a single view. He did not consider how crude in feeling and conception, how chaotic through lack of motive and design, how feeble in expression, his work might be; it had for a season engaged his whole heart and mind; it was the creature of his brain; it must live no half-life in the uneasy limbo of manu-

\* Medwin speaks of their walks on clear and frosty days of this winter. December, 1809, had no frost, and was extraordinarily mild; so was the first fortnight of the new year, but on January 14 began a sharp frost (Edinburgh Annual Register, vol. vi. pp. 493-506; Meteorological Journal kept at London).



CHAP. II. script, but press forward to the independent existence of a book full-fledged and addressed to fly abroad. Shelley was Apr. 1810-  
Mar. 1811. impressible in an extraordinary degree; what interested his imagination became a portion of himself. It was his misfortune as a boy to fall under the influence of detestable literary models, and to these he abandoned himself with single-hearted zeal. With what is robust and realistic in eighteenth-century fiction Shelley was out of sympathy. We may conjecture that the schoolboy who devours "Tom Jones" generally finds other attractions in the book than its abundant knowledge of human nature, its genial breadth of feeling, its manly humour; but with Shelley its coarser touches, its easy morality, would have been only repellent. He found what suited his boyish passion for romance and mystery and horror in such ballads as those of Matthew Gregory Lewis, whose false gallop of rhyme readily took the ear, and in forgotten tales by forgotten writers for the Minerva Press, or extravagant romances translated from the German.\* The amazement with which we peruse Shelley's "Zastrozzi" and "St. Irvyne" subsides when we have regaled our mind for a while on such high-seasoned confections as "The Mysterious Hand, or Subterranean Horrors!" in three volumes; "The Demon of Sicily," a romance in four volumes; or Lewis's translation of Zschokke's famous robber-romance, "The Bravo of Venice." And these are but specimens of a numerous tribe. A finer model Shelley had before him in Southey's "Thalaba;" its moral ardour perhaps influenced his spirit as much as its wild incidents and musical recitative fascinated his imagination. "Now it was, I think," wrote the great captain among Oxford combatants of a generation later—"now it was that I repeated to myself the words, which had ever been dear to me from my school days, 'Exoriare aliquis!' now, too, that Southey's

\* Medwin speaks of the powerful impression produced on Shelley by Lady Diana Beauchamp's translation of Bürger's spectral ballad "Leonora," and of Shelley's admiration for Chatterton's poetry.

beautiful poem of 'Thalaba,' for which I had an immense liking, came forcibly to my mind. I began to think that I had a mission." \* Shelley, little resembling the leader of the High Church movement of 1830, was a lover of "Thalaba," and began, like Newman, to think, before his Oxford days were over, that he "had a mission ;" he was prepared—rash paladin of unbelief—to venture alone under the roots of the ancient sea that he might destroy for ever his Domdaniel seminary of magicians.

CHAP. II.  
Apr. 1810–  
Mar. 1811.

We find it impossible to imagine Shelley at work upon any of his characteristic writings with a collaborator by his side. He secluded himself even from those who were dearest to him, in his boat under the Bisham woods, among the flowery ruins of the baths of Caracalla, or beside some dark pool in the Italian pine-forest, and there he created his incommunicable song. But nearly all his earlier attempts in prose and verse were made in partnership. With his eldest sister as joint-author he secretly wrote a play and sent it to Matthews, the comedian, who returned the manuscript with the courteous reply that it would not do for acting. He encouraged his sister Hellen in verse-making. "His first lesson to me," she says, "I perfectly remember." Between reminiscences of nursery rhymes and of Lewis's poems she got as far as—

"There was an old woman, as I have heard say,  
Who worked metamorphoses every day."

As far as this, and farther. "There were several short poems, I think, of which he gave me the subject; and one line about 'an old woman in her bony gown' (even the rhyme to which line I forget) elicited the praise for which I wrote. Subsequently he had them printed, and a mistake I made about sending one of my heroes or heroines out by night and day in the same stanza he would not alter, but excused it by quoting something from Shakespeare. When I saw my name

\* Newman, "Apologia pro Vita Sua."

CHAP. II. on the title-page, 'H—ll—n Sh—ll—y,' I felt much more  
 Apr. 1810- frightened than pleased, and as soon as the publication was  
 Mar. 1811. seen by my superiors it was bought up and destroyed." In the winter of 1809-10 Shelley and his cousin Medwin wrote, in alternate chapters, the opening of a romance with the cheerful title "Nightmare," in which a gigantic witch, offspring perhaps of the "old woman in her bony gown," played a principal part. A more important undertaking was a romantic narrative poem, in which also Medwin was his fellow-labourer, on the subject of the Wandering Jew. Shelley or his cousin had picked up in Lincoln's Inn Fields a printed fragment \* containing the translation of part of Schubart's poem, "Der Ewige Jude." The subject was one which had within it strange springs of pity and awe, and Ahasuerus—a fellow-sufferer of Prometheus, but in Christian legend—henceforth haunted Shelley's imagination, and was not lost to view in after-years—type of perpetual youth in hoariest age, of everlasting permanence in endless vicissitude, of the anguish which tyranny can inflict, of the wisdom and gentleness which come through suffering, and of the never-ending resurgence of the human spirit against the dead weight of oppression. Now he rises beside those airy battlements that surmount the universe, to reveal forbidden lore to Ianthe's spirit; now he hangs, a mangled ruin of manhood, yet calm and triumphant, in the cedar tree of the Assassins' valley, or gazes over the precipice while the inno-

\* Probably part of the *German Museum* (a monthly periodical) for June, 1801, or some journal which had reprinted from it the translation from Schubart given on its pp. 424-426. The date of "The Wandering Jew" is not precisely fixed. In Medwin's *Memoir of Shelley*, prefixed to the "Shelley Papers" (1833), he writes, "Shortly afterwards [*i.e.* after Shelley was 'about fifteen'] we wrote in conjunction six or seven cantos on the story of the Wandering Jew." Shelley was fifteen in August, 1807. In his "Life of Shelley," Medwin gives the winter 1809-10 as the date of the "Nightmare" romance, and says that they then turned from prose to poetry, and formed "a grand design of a metrical romance on the subject of the Wandering Jew." Shelley's forwarding the manuscript to Ballantyne in that year, his subsequently offering it to Stockdale, and his interest in the subject, which led him (according to Medwin) to inquire whether Schubart's poem were in the Bodleian Library, are circumstances which seem to confirm the later date.

cent Assassin children fondle or sport with their favourite snake; and now he comes forth by moonlight from his sea-cavern of a foamless isle, with glittering eye and snow-white hair and beard, to show as in a dream to the Turk the mutability of empire and the ever-new renascence of liberty. Some seven or eight cantos of "The Wandering Jew," Medwin tells us, were written, the first three or four being almost entirely his own. These remain to us, but Shelley's portion of the poem is unascertained or undiscovered. The manuscript was sent by Shelley to Thomas Campbell for his opinion, who returned it with the comment that there were only two good lines in the poem—

CHAP. II.  
Apr. 1810—  
Mar. 1811.

"It seemed as if some angel's sigh  
Had breathed the plaintive symphony."

From the Scotch poet, Shelley appealed to a Scotch publishing firm. Messrs. Ballantyne and Co. kept him long in suspense; then gave a prudent reply—they did not doubt the success of the poem, but it was perhaps better suited to the liberal feelings of the English than "the bigoted spirit which yet pervades many cultivated minds in this country;" on all sides the spiritual rulers of the land assailed even Walter Scott, —so declares Ballantyne—for having promulgated atheistical doctrines in "The Lady of the Lake." Little Ballantyne—Scott's "Rigdumfunnidos"—was a fellow of infinite jest, a thoroughly light-hearted droll, says Lockhart, all over quaintness and humorous mimicry. At this time, "jocund Johnney" was selling his patron's atheistical poem by tens of thousands; it is hard not to imagine a twinkle in his eye as he indited so ingenious an excuse for declining the immature verses of a boy.\*

\* Ballantyne and Co's letter is dated September 24, 1810. The first four cantos of "The Wandering Jew" appeared in an early volume of *Fraser's Magazine*, and they were included among Shelley's works in Daly's cheap edition of 1836. To a non-expert the theology of these cantos seems eminently respectable; but the later and lost portion of the poem may have been less orthodox. "As to its containing atheistical principles," writes Shelley, when offering the poem for

CHAP. II. Before he had ceased to be a schoolboy Shelley was author of a romance for which, though the statement may seem hardly credible, a publisher of Paternoster Row is said to have been venturesome enough to pay the sum of forty pounds. Of this sum a portion forthwith transformed itself into a banquet at which the fortunate author feasted eight of his schoolfellows.\* "Zastrozzi," which bears upon its title-page the initials "P. B. S.," was in great part written by May of the year 1809, perhaps considerably earlier. On April 1 of the following year it was published, or was almost ready for publication. Its schoolboy author, assuming a knowing air of cynical worldly wisdom (if, indeed, he be not rather celebrating All Fools' Day and jesting with his correspondent), writes to his young friend Edward Graham, complaining that the publisher will take no trouble with the reviewers, who must therefore be duly "pouched." Ten pounds will be sufficient, he supposes; and the *British Review*, being the "hardest," must in particular be well pouched. Graham will see that everything proper be done about "the venal villains." At Easter an impression may be produced on the dull publisher Robinson, who seemed so little zealous on behalf of "Zastrozzi." "We will all go in a *posse* to the bookseller's in Mr. Grove's

publication to Stockdale, "I assure you I was wholly unaware of the fact hinted at" [*i.e.* by Ballantyne].

Mr. Bertram Dobell writes to me (May 20, 1886), "'The Wandering Jew,' it is usually supposed, was first made known to the world when published in *Fraser's Magazine*. I have discovered, however, that two years earlier (in 1829) an article about it, with large extracts from the poem, appeared in the *Edinburgh Literary Journal*. This article gives the dedication to Sir Francis Burdett, and the preface, which are not given in *Fraser*. The extracts given show, moreover, that the copy used by the editor of the former journal differed widely from the *Fraser* copy. One thing has become clear to me, viz. that the poem was Shelley's own almost or entirely, and that Medwin's statement, about his having written three or four cantos of it, is as inaccurate as Medwin's statements usually are. Medwin states that it consisted of seven or eight cantos; but Shelley's poem, I am convinced, was complete in four."

\* The statements are those of Shelley's schoolfellow, Mr. Packe. As to the date of publication, it may be noted that "Zastrozzi" is mentioned among publications of the month in the *British Critic* for April, 1810. It was reviewed unfavourably in the *Critical Review* for November, 1810.

barouche and four—show them that we are no Grub Street CHAP. II.  
garreteers.”

Apr. 1810—  
Mar. 1811.

“Zastrozzi” is a boy’s attempt to rival and surpass the pieces of contemporary fiction which for a time had caught his fancy—romances of pseudo-passion and the pseudo-sublime written in staccato sentences of incoherent prose. In “Zastrozzi” the boy-author abandons himself, with characteristic singleness of feeling, to his conceptions, and lives with enthusiasm prepense in a world of elaborated absurdity. The towering figure of Zastrozzi, his cheeks pale with passion, his lips a-quiver, his eyes darting revengeful glances; the “symmetrical form” of the “elegantly proportioned Matilda;” Julia’s “interesting softness”—that of “an enchanting and congenial female”—her ethereal air, her sensibility, her virtues; the gentle Verezzi, victim of love and revenge;—they are like the ladies and gentlemen of a travelling waxwork show, whose breasts heave, whose eyes roll, when the creaking machinery within them is wound up and set in jerky motion. There is the haughty and remorseless tyrant, and the pale martyr whom he pursues and persecutes to the death; one heroine all energy and passion, and another all tenderness and purity; and in the close, by an unexpected turn, the terrible Zastrozzi, like Lewis’s bravo of Venice, is discovered to be no monster of crime, but a strange and gloomy justiciary inspired by devotion to the memory of his outraged mother. It is all a marvel of the grotesque-sublime; and yet not without a curious interest for those who would study the psychology of genius, since it was the brain that conceived Zastrozzi which created Count Cenci, and the inventor of Julia and La Contessa di Laurentini who in after-years made Asia the consoler and sustainer of Prometheus.

Some chapters of “Zastrozzi,” if we may trust Medwin’s statement, were written by Shelley’s cousin, Harriet Grove, whom he had known as a child, and with whom his acquaintance ripened into close intimacy in 1809 or 1810. It may be that

CHAP. II. during all his Eton days he cherished the memory and vision of her in his imagination.\* Certainly in his eighteenth year Shelley loved her with the single-heartedness and sincerity of youth. Harriet Grove was of his own age, and resembled him in her looks.† “When I call to mind all the women I have ever seen and admired,” wrote Medwin, “I know of none that surpassed, few that could compare with her in beauty. I think of her as of some picture of Raphael’s or as one of Shakspeare’s women.” Her spirits were bright, her conversation lively. “How fresh and pretty she was!” exclaims Hellen Shelley, in calling up the memory of a visit paid to Mrs. Fenning’s school at Clapham by Harriet and Bysshe in company with their elders, when Hellen was herself a schoolgirl. “Harriet Grove’s assistance was invoked to keep the wild boy quiet, for he was full of pranks, and upset the port wine on the tray-cloth, for our schoolmistress was hospitable, and had offered refreshments; then we all walked in the garden, and there was much ado to calm the spirits of the wild boy.” In the summer of 1810, when Shelley, no longer a schoolboy, felt within him the stir and hopes of dawning manhood, there was a family gathering of the Grove household at Field Place—father, mother, Charlotte, Harriet, and Charles, a lad of fifteen just released from service in the navy. “Bysshe,” writes Charles Grove, “was at this time more attached to my sister Harriet than I can express, and I recollect well the moonlight walks we four had at Strode, and also at St. Irving’s, the name, I think, of the

\* I have seen an unpublished poem—six stanzas—of Shelley’s in Harriet Shelley’s handwriting, headed “February 28, 1805. To St. Irvyne”—St. Irvyne the name of a place where the writer often sat on “the mouldering height” with “his Harriet”—and having the words “To H. Grove” subscribed, also in Harriet Shelley’s handwriting. The poem can hardly have been written in 1805, but the title may refer to some incident of February in that year, which might be viewed as a starting-point in the course of their love. A reference in this poem to Strood, the property of John Commerell, Esq., hard by Field Place, leads one to suppose that “St. Irvyne” may have been formed from the name of the proprietor of Hills Place, also close to Field Place—Lady Irvine.

† Miss Grove’s Christian name was sometimes written “Harriett.”

place then the Duke of Norfolk's at Horsham." \* The attachment of the cousins was seen and sanctioned by the elders, and though no engagement of marriage was given or received, it was felt that this might be not far off.† From Field Place the whole party, except Shelley's father, migrated to the house of Harriet's elder brother in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and there a happy month went by. Shelley was in the argumentative stage of adolescence, and he more than other youths delighted in intellectual discussion. He had acknowledged probably some theological doubts to his cousin and confessor, and she for her part had admitted that she was, or had been, "a sceptic." What could be more delightful than to open a correspondence by letter, in which things heavenly and things earthly might be debated, and he and she might see "if by coincidence of intellect" they "were willing to enter into a closer, an eternal union"? Few things gratified Shelley at this time so much as to deploy his mind on sheets of quarto letter-paper for the benefit of some fair correspondent whose intellect needed to be awakened or emancipated. When at Eton he had learnt from Dr. Lind, whose ways were the reverse of conventional, to address letters to any stranger of promise, from whom he might hope for the joy of intellectual sympathy or the quickening of argumentative encounter. Thus, on reading the earliest volume by Felicia Browne (afterwards Felicia Hemans), and hearing from Medwin, who had met her, how full of interest and charm the girl-author was, Shelley, a boy of sixteen, wrote to her soliciting a correspondence, and, if we may trust Medwin, letter followed letter until Felicia's mother, alarmed by his auda-

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\* Was not the name of the Duke of Norfolk's place Worminghurst Park? By "Strode" is probably meant Strood or Stroud (for I find both forms of the name) mentioned in the previous note.

† Mr. C. H. Grove speaks distinctly of the dissolution of an engagement of marriage. Miss Hellen Shelley states that Harriet Grove did not consider herself bound by a promise to Shelley, and that, had she done so, her father would not have persisted in his objection to their union. Shelley's letters to Hogg bear out Miss Shelley's view (see Hogg's "Life," i. p. 146).



CHAP. II. cities of opinion, forbade further communications.\* Now, Apr. 1810–  
Mar. 1811. also, his correspondent was lovely and young and bright of temper, and she was one who might soon be his betrothed. It is easy to imagine what volumes of enthusiastic feeling, mingled with eager argument, and philosophizings tending far astray from the safe enclosure of orthodox belief, were poured forth on ample letter-paper, and conveyed, under cover of Timothy Shelley's frank, to Miss Harriet Grove's address in Wiltshire, during the autumn of 1810; easy to imagine how Harriet and her elders fell gradually from bewilderment to doubt, and from doubt to dismay.

Meanwhile another literary project was on foot. Mr. John Joseph Stockdale carried on, at No. 41, Pall Mall, the book-selling and publishing business which had flourished under his father during some twenty years of the last century. Aspirant novelists, poets, dramatists, loved to see the imprint of Stockdale on their happy title-pages. Early in the autumn of 1810, a very young man—not looking more than eighteen, says the publisher—introduced himself to Stockdale, explaining that he was the eldest son of Mr. Timothy Shelley, M.P.; that he had printed a volume of poems at Horsham—no fewer than fourteen hundred and eighty copies had been struck off—and unhappily he knew not where to find a sum sufficient to pay the account: would Stockdale take the quires, bind them, and offer the volume for sale? A wealthy heir, afflicted with scribbling propensities, is not to be lightly dismissed by a prudent publisher. Somehow the Horsham printer's account was discharged, the unbound sheets arrived at Pall Mall, and on September 18 and 19 appeared an advertisement in the morning papers: "This day is published, in royal 8vo, price

\* Medwin states that Shelley wrote in his (Medwin's) name, and that Felicia's mother wrote to Mr. Medwin, senior, begging him to use his influence with Shelley to drop the correspondence. Miss Hellen Shelley, however, declares that Felicia's answer to Shelley's first letter "was to an effect which gave no encouragement to further correspondence." In this instance Medwin was likely to have been better informed than Miss Shelley.

4s. in boards, 'Original Poems,' by Victor and Cazire." Like CHAP. II.  
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Mar. 1811. other early productions of Shelley, this octavo of sixty-four pages was the joint work of himself and some co-labourer under the Muses—not Medwin now, but one who was assumed at the time to be a lady, fitted to bear, in contrast with the gallant masculine name of "Victor," her soft-sliding, feminine pseudonym "Cazire." Was "Cazire" Shelley's sister Elizabeth? or the colleague who had elaborated with him some of the nonsense of "Zastrozzi"—his cousin and beloved, Harriet Grove? Fourteen hundred and eighty copies; a mysterious number, but one which at least indicated a robust faith in the appetite of the public for "original poetry." If only the poetry were indeed original! But a few days after its publication, Stockdale, looking through the little volume with more care than he had previously had leisure to bestow, recognized one of the pieces as a transcript from the pages of Matthew Gregory Lewis, author of "The Monk" and of many tales of wonder and tales of terror in ballad form. He made haste to communicate his discovery to Shelley. "With all the ardour incidental to his character," writes Stockdale, "which embraced youthful honour in all its brilliancy, he expressed the warmest resentment at the imposition practised upon him by his coadjutor, and entreated me to destroy all the copies." Already, however, about one hundred copies were in circulation, and the volume was in the hands of the reviewers. Two epistles, doubtless of Cazire's inditing, which vainly attempt to imitate the verse of the Bath Guide, introduce the original poetry, the writer laying claim to no more than "sense, wit, and grammar," and occasionally coming short in each of these. Growing courageous as she advances, she addresses her poetical yokefellow, or perhaps her own genius—

"Be not a coward, shrink not a tense,  
But read it all over, and make it out sense.  
What a tiresome girl!—pray soon make an end."

"The last line," observes a severely witty reviewer, "if not

CHAP. II. measure, contains at least truth in the first part, and a reasonable wish in the second." The rest of the volume, he tells us, "is filled up by songs of sentimental nonsense and very absurd tales of horror." These were probably the products of Victor's genius, and the reviewer's description is likely enough to be accurate. The thin octavo has wholly disappeared from human ken, but of a hundred copies put into circulation one must surely lurk for future discovery. Meanwhile we can await its reappearance with equanimity, and may be willing to accept as not unjust the decision of one of the critical confraternity who sit cross-legged over the nativity of books: "Original Poetry by Victor and Cazire. There is no original *poetry* in this volume; there is nothing in it but downright scribble." \*

Because the name Cazire has a feminine sound, and because one of the writers in the lost volume wrote as a woman, the assumption has been hastily made that Shelley's collaborator was not of his own sex. At this time Shelley was pleased to amuse himself with mystifications. In 1810 and 1811 no friend perhaps was closer to Shelley, or more a sympathizer with his literary efforts, than Edward Graham. Graham's father had been in the army, perhaps still was so. The son, who when very young exhibited considerable talent for music, had attracted the notice of Mr. Timothy Shelley, and at his expense the lad was educated. In Mr. Shelley's house he grew up, and Bysshe and Graham, says a common friend of theirs, "were like brothers." In 1810, young Graham resided in London, where he was a pupil in music of the

\* The relations of Shelley with Stockdale were brought to light by Mr. Garnett in his interesting article, "Shelley in Pall Mall" (*Macmillan's Magazine*, June, 1860), founded upon the narrative, with letters of Shelley interspersed, in *Stockdale's Budget* (1827). Stockdale's statement has since been reprinted in J. C. Hotten's edition of Shelley's Poetical Works. The "Victor and Cazire" volume was reviewed in the *Poetical Register* for 1810-11, p. 617, and less briefly in a notice, which I was fortunate enough to light on, in the *British Critic* for April, 1811.

celebrated Woelfl.\* To him Shelley wrote his wild letter of CHAP. II.  
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Mar. 1811. April 1, requesting him (whether seriously or in jest who shall say?) to pouch those venal villains, the reviewers. To him in a letter of the same year, dated "Friday, 1810," he sends a song, that which afterwards appeared in the novel "St. Irvyne," beginning—

"How stern are the woes of the desolate mourner!"

Graham is to show the song to the composer Woelfl; nor is it the first of Shelley's which Woelfl has seen. "You well know," writes Shelley, "I am not much of a hand at *love* songs; you see I mingle metaphysics with even this, but perhaps in this age of philosophy that may be excused. You have not done what I told you. The *Morning Chronicle* at least has not inserted it." A postscript adds the words, "What think you of our poetry? What is said of it?—no flattery, remember." Early in the autumn of 1810, says Stockdale, Shelley applied to him to become the publisher of the volume printed at Horsham. On September 18, the "Original Poetry, by Victor and Cazire," was advertised in the London papers. A fortnight before this, when the poems were already printed, Shelley wrote to Graham from Field Place, on September 3, declaring that he had heard from "friend P——" that Graham had turned Epicurean. "Glorious effect indeed," he goes on, "of camp conversations! [Graham, perhaps, had been in the society of his father's friends.] But if a metamorphosis so extraordinary has been wrought in you, how will you reconcile your tenets to your profession? In good earnest I shall be extremely sorry if it is really true that you have deserted us. Our friendship, I trust, needs not any other evidence to confirm its sincerity than what arises from the testimony of our hearts. I know of no vows so solemn as those of friendship, and a friend who breaks with me unjustly is not worth preserving.

\* Joseph Woelfl, composer and pianist, born at Salzburg, 1772; died in London, 1814.

CHAP. II. Reflection and habit have rendered the world so indifferent to me, that I am neither afflicted nor rejoiced, angry nor pleased, at what happens in it, any further than personal friendships interest me in the affairs of it; and this principle extends my cares but a little way. Perfect tranquillity is the general tenor of my life—serene weather and some other mechanic springs wind me up above it now and then, but I never fall below it. At all adventures yours and my name shall stand linked as friends to posterity both in verse and prose, and, as Tully calls it, *in consuetudine studiemus*.” What more probable than that Shelley or Graham, masking in feminine attire, is the Cazire of the lost volume issued in September by Stockdale?

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On April 10, 1810, Percy Bysshe Shelley signed his name as a student in the books of University College, Oxford, “Sub tutamine Magistri Rowley et Domini Davison.”\* Having matriculated, he returned to Eton, and there remained until he had ended his schooling, and pronounced his speech of Cicero against Catiline on July 30. At the beginning of Michaelmas Term, after the happy summer days with Harriet Grove and his acquaintance with the pleasures and pains of authorship, Shelley was again in Oxford, now about to enter on residence. On one or other of these occasions—probably the second—his father accompanied him. University College had in former days seen Timothy Shelley as a student within its walls, and now the son was to follow in his father’s learned steps; there was, moreover, an exhibition held in the college, styled the Leicester Exhibition, to which Bysshe had been nominated in April by Sir John Shelley-Sidney, of Penshurst, as heir of the Sidney Earls of Leicester. Surrounded by objects which recalled his early days, and lodging in his old quarters—a house distinguished by the sign of the leaden horse—with the son of his former host, Mr. Timothy Shelley was in a gracious mood. One of the sons of Mr. Slatyer, his

\* Mr. Rowley was afterwards Master of University College.

departed host, was about to embark in business as partner with a bookseller and printer. To the place of business Mr. Timothy repaired with Bysshe, and enjoined the young student to purchase there whatever he might need in books and stationery. "My son here," he went on, pointing to the wild-haired youth with luminous eyes who stood by—"my son here has a literary turn; he is already an author, and do pray indulge him in his printing freaks." One of these printing freaks, before many months had gone by, was to drive Shelley forth into banishment from Oxford, and to close against him the doors of his father's house.\*

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In first-floor rooms, now known as "The Shelley Lecture-room," in the corner next the hall of the principal quadrangle of University College, the new-comer took up his abode. The venerable traditions of Oxford probably affected little a mind at all times singularly insensible to the wisdom or the sentiment of history. Oxford in 1810 represented the past; it was Shelley's aspiration to break with the past, and belong, as he conceived it, wholly to the present or the future. The routine of instruction was not attractive to a young and eager mind; tutors' lectures and compulsory chapels are perhaps fuller of charm and inspiration when remembered after a decade or two than when actually endured. In Shelley's day the learning and the logic of Oxford had been somewhat discredited with the public through the criticisms or calumnies of the Edinburgh reviewers, with whom Copleston, as champion of the university, had broken a lance. The system of education was represented as monkish and mediæval, at a time when no spell of enchantment lay in the word "mediæval." And doubtless there was room for improvement, if not reform. Of twenty-three professors fourteen enjoyed sinecures; nine only were efficient, and now one, now another

\* Some of the particulars given above are obtained from an interesting letter on Shelley at Oxford by the publisher, Mr. Henry Slatter, which appears in the notes to Robert Montgomery's "Oxford," in the third edition of that poem.

CHAP. II. of these nine would be unable to find a class, and consequently the lectures would lapse for a term or even a year.\* The professorial lectures which drew an audience were those in divinity—and Bysshe was not a theologian; in geometry—and Bysshe's mind, beset with images and haunted by itself, was yet insensible to the contrasted charm of the abstractions of geometric science; in history—and all through his life it was by an effort that Shelley forced himself to attend to what seemed to him a record of miseries and crimes, a chaotic welter of unreasoning forces.† With a section of the dons the round of ideas revolved unvaryingly from Church and State to Aristotle and the Prince of Wales, and back again to Church and State. Of the undergraduates a considerable number bent their learned powers to gain pre-eminence in scoring points at billiards, in drinking deep, in driving tandem, in tying the neckcloth so as to emulate the mode of the stout Court Adonis, or in raising bills which they never intended to pay.‡ The special charm of Oxford for Shelley lay in the comparative freedom of the student's life. He could pursue his own studies without interruption, and in the citadel of his chambers, be poet, natural philosopher, metaphysician, in turns as it pleased him. Here was no Bethell to extinguish unceremoniously the Satanic flames of chemical experiment; no Lucas,§ as at Field Place, to tear away, amid a volley of execrations, the candle by which Master Bysshe would read in bed, and which, it was feared, might set the house in a blaze; no swarm of young marauders, invading with persistent persecution his solitude and tranquillity. If he wished to be absent from hall, and had used his ordinary privilege of

\* "State of the University of Oxford in 1809," in the *Edinburgh Annual Register* for that year—a well-informed and seemingly not unfair account of education at the university.

† Gibbon, however, was always a favourite writer with Shelley.

‡ A lively picture of Oxford student-life at about this date will be found in Lockhart's novel "Reginald Dalton."

§ Mr. Timothy Shelley's steward, who related to Dr. Sadler what is told above.

absence too freely, it was easy to become *æger* for the day, CHAP. II.  
and by a venial fiction obtain an invalid's privilege to possess <sup>Apr. 1810-</sup>  
his chambers in peace from morning to night, and night to <sup>Mar. 1811.</sup>  
morning; if he desired the companionship of some chosen  
friend, there was all the afternoon free for country rambles,  
all the endless hours from five till long past midnight for  
converse and debate.

One such friend, and only one during the months at  
Oxford, Shelley found. Thomas Jefferson Hogg, son of a gentle-  
man of old family and high Tory politics, residing at Stockton-  
on-Tees, had entered University College in the early part of  
the year 1810, a short time before Shelley. Early in Michael-  
mas Term they met for the first time, and speedily followed a  
close alliance, which for a season excluded every other friend-  
ship, and was momentous in its consequences for each of the  
inseparable pair. There was little resemblance between the  
friends. Hogg had intellectual powers of no common order,  
and all through his life was an ardent lover of literature; but  
he cared little or nothing for doctrines and abstract principles  
such as formed the very food on which the revolutionary  
intellect of Shelley fed; and his interest in literature was that  
of a man of the world who finds in poetry a refuge from the  
tedium of common life. For the foibles and follies and false  
enthusiasms of individuals or coteries, Hogg had a keen eye  
and a mocking tongue; yet he tolerated all novelties of  
opinion or of practice as bright oases in the desert of common  
sense. Above all things, he hated a dullard and a bore. For  
his own part he was well pleased to enjoy the world, to accept  
things as they are, to toil in the appointed ways for the  
allotted rewards, to take life pleasantly and have his laugh  
and his jest at the human comedy; and thus he was pro-  
tected by a fine non-conducting web of intellectuality and of  
worldliness from all those influences which startle and way-  
lay the soul of the poet, the lover, the saint, and the hero.  
But his perception was clear that it is they, and they alone,



CHAP. II. who make life something better than a dull round of common-place, from which one might at any moment sink to apathy or disgust. In Shelley there stood real and living before him "the divine poet"—all that he himself could never be, and could not even choose to be. For "the divine poet" Hogg's admiration was genuine and vivid; but with his admiration for the poet there mingled a man of the world's sense of superiority to the immortal child. Accordingly Shelley appeared to Hogg at once sublime and ridiculous, a being fashioned to serve as an inexhaustible source of delight and diversion to men of sense and wit. Sailors, says a French poet, sometimes beguile the tedium of their voyage by putting a captured albatross through his paces on the deck; the great white wings of the bird of sea and sky droop piteously by his side and impede his movements, while he struggles amidst the jeering crew. As skillless and comical as the albatross on deck did Shelley appear in Hogg's eyes, when he had deserted his region of upper air for this substantial earth of ours. In reality Shelley possessed an excellent business faculty when his imagination and emotions did not disturb his understanding, and when he cared to fix his attention on practical details; but this fact did not attract the notice of Hogg. In his view Shelley was either "the divine poet" or "the poor fellow"—most charming and most grotesque of human innocents or oddities; and the peculiar piquancy of Hogg's account of his relations with Shelley lies in this—that in Hogg the lover of the ideal was at the same time a man of the world, and the man of the world was a lover of the ideal, so that underlying his admiration we can always discover a kind of amused disdain, and again under his disdain a certain involuntary loyalty and admiration.\*

For Shelley's six months at Oxford, Hogg is our sufficient

\* It is important to bear in mind that Hogg, the Oxford student, was much less a man of the world, and more an enthusiastic and romantic person than Hogg, the biographer of Shelley. He wrote poetry when at Oxford, and made some way with an attempt at a prize poem on the subject of "The Dying Gladiator."

and almost our only witness. We should spoil his narrative CHAP. II.  
 if we were to interrupt it with cross-questioning or rebuke. Apr. 1810-  
 No doubt he is inaccurate, and even contradicts himself in Mar. 1811.  
 matters of detail; no doubt his wit and fancy, not always  
 tempered by discretion or good taste, fill up the gaps in his  
 recollection. With the skill of an admirable story-teller, he  
 heightens colours and rehandles incidents so as to bring out  
 their force and point. After a score of years he ventures to  
 reproduce long harangues and dialogues with a heroic con-  
 fidence in his reader's willingness to accept, if the *vero* be not  
 at hand, the *ben trovato*. What is more serious, he does not  
 scruple to convey facts out of sight and fill their room with  
 pleasant fiction; he never hesitates to retouch and alter  
 letters in Shelley's handwriting, so as to adapt them to his  
 own taste.\* If we seek for exactness in details, for fidelity  
 in the use of documents, we must go to other authorities than  
 Hogg. But the veracity of the historian and the veracity of  
 the artist are not identical. Allowing for Hogg's peculiar  
 point of view, for his egotism, and for the fact that at all  
 hazards he must be witty, we may assert that in his chapters  
 on Shelley at Oxford he has painted an admirable portrait,  
 true in the essential qualities of being characteristic and  
 living. "Hogg," declared Trelawny, "has painted Shelley  
 exactly as I knew him."† A higher authority than Trelawny,  
 Mary Shelley, points to Hogg's early sketch—the articles  
 dealing with Shelley at Oxford—as describing admirably the  
 state of his mind during his collegiate life. It is right that  
 Shelley's biographer should stand aside for the present, and  
 let Shelley's comrade and coeval be the chief speaker.

\* I have had ample evidence of the truth of this statement in collating the letters of Shelley to Hookham, as printed by Hogg with the originals in Shelley's handwriting. The letters to Godwin are printed with much fidelity.

† Trelawny adds, "At the same time, it is necessary to know that Hogg despised poetry; he thought it all nonsense, and barely tolerated Shakespeare." As far as I can form an opinion, it does not agree with this. Hogg had a true pleasure in literature—a man of the world's pleasure—and was certainly for long a vigorous student of his favourite Greek authors.

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"At the commencement of Michaelmas Term," writes Hogg, "that is, at the end of October in the year 1810, I happened one day to sit next a freshman at dinner; it was his first appearance in hall. His figure was slight, and his aspect remarkably youthful, even at our table, where all were very young. He seemed thoughtful and absent. He ate little, and had no acquaintance with any one. I know not how it was that we fell into conversation, for such familiarity was unusual, and, strange to say, much reserve prevailed in a society where there could not possibly be occasion for any. We have often endeavoured in vain to recollect in what manner our discourse began, and especially by what transition it passed to a subject sufficiently remote from all the associations we were able to trace. The stranger had expressed an enthusiastic admiration for poetical and imaginative works of the German school. I dissented from his criticisms. He upheld the originality of the German writings. I asserted their want of nature. "What modern literature," said he, "will you compare to theirs?" I named the Italian. This roused all his impetuosity; and few, as I soon discovered, were more impetuous in argumentative conversation. So eager was our dispute, that when the servants came to clear the tables, we were not aware that we had been left alone. I remarked that it was time to quit the hall, and I invited the stranger to finish the discussion at my rooms. He eagerly assented. He lost the thread of his discourse in the transit, and the whole of his enthusiasm in the cause of Germany; for as soon as he arrived at my rooms, and whilst I was lighting the candles, he said calmly, and to my great surprise, that he was not qualified to maintain such a discussion, for he was alike ignorant of Italian and German, and had only the works of the Germans in translations, and but little of Italian poetry, even at second-hand. For my part, I confessed, with an equal ingenuousness, that I knew nothing of German, and but little of Italian; that I had spoken only

through others, and like him had hitherto seen by the glimmering light of translations." \* CHAP. II.

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Over their dessert and wine the talk went on. It mattered little, declared Shelley, whether German or Italian literature were the more excellent, for what was all literature but vain trifling? What was the study of ancient or modern tongues but merely a study of words and phrases, of the names of things? How much wiser it were to investigate things themselves! "I inquired, a little bewildered, how this was to be effected. He answered, 'Through the physical sciences, and especially through chemistry;' and raising his voice, his face flushing as he spoke, he discoursed, with a degree of animation that far outshone his zeal in defence of the Germans, of chemistry and chemical analysis." Feeling little interest in the subject of this discourse, Hogg had leisure to examine the appearance of his extraordinary guest. "It was a sum of many contradictions. His figure was slight and fragile, and yet his bones and joints were large and strong. He was tall, but he stooped so much that he seemed of a low stature.† His clothes were expensive, and made according to the most approved mode of the day; but they were tumbled, rumpled, unbrushed. His gestures were abrupt, and sometimes violent, occasionally even awkward, yet more frequently gentle and graceful. His complexion was delicate, and almost feminine, of the purest red and white; yet he was tanned and freckled by exposure to the sun, having passed the autumn, as he said, in shooting. His features, his whole face and particularly his head, were, in fact, unusually small; yet the last *appeared* of a remarkable bulk, for his hair was long and

\* Medwin states that during his last year at Eton Shelley worked hard at German; and if, as Mr. Forman thinks, "St. Irvyne" be in great part a translation from the German, it would seem that Medwin is here to be trusted rather than Hogg. I incline, however, to the opinion that Shelley at this date knew nothing of German.

† Mr. Thornton Hunt writes of Shelley, "An habitual eagerness of mood, thrusting forward his face, made him stoop, with sunken chest and rounded shoulders" (*Atlantic Monthly*: Shelley: February, 1863, p. 189).

CHAP. II. bushy, and in fits of absence, and in the agonies (if I may use the word) of anxious thought, he often rubbed it fiercely with his hands, or passed his fingers quickly through his locks unconsciously, so that it was singularly wild and rough. In times when it was the mode to imitate stage-coachmen as closely as possible in costume, and when the hair was invariably cropped, like that of our soldiers, this eccentricity was very striking. His features were not symmetrical (the mouth, perhaps, excepted), yet was the effect of the whole extremely powerful. They breathed an animation, a fire, an enthusiasm, a vivid and preternatural intelligence, that I never met with in any other countenance. Nor was the moral expression less beautiful than the intellectual; for there was a softness, a delicacy, a gentleness, and especially (though this will surprise many) that air of profound religious veneration that characterizes the best works, and chiefly the frescoes (and into these they infused their whole souls) of the great masters of Florence and of Rome. . . . But there was one physical blemish that threatened to neutralize all his excellence"—his voice, which was "excruciating"—"it was intolerably shrill, harsh, and discordant; of the most cruel intension,—it was perpetual, and without any remission,—it excoriated the ears."\* As the shrill discourse proceeded, suddenly a clock without chimed the quarter to seven, and Shelley was away on flying foot to attend a lecture on mineralogy. An hour later and he burst into Hogg's room, threw down his cap, and stood chafing his

\* *Shelley's voice.* Peacock, an excellent authority on such a matter, writes of Hogg's statement, "There is a good deal in these volumes about Shelley's discordant voice. This defect he certainly had; but it was chiefly observable when he spoke under excitement. Then his voice was not only dissonant like a jarring string, but he spoke in sharp fourths, the most displeasing sequence of sound that can fall on the human ear: but it was scarcely so when he spoke calmly, and not at all so when he read; on the contrary, he seemed then to have his voice under perfect command; it was good both in tune and in tone; it was low and soft, but clear, distinct, and expressive. I have heard him read almost all Shakspeare's tragedies, and some of his more poetical comedies, and it was a pleasure to hear him read them" (*Memoirs of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, in Peacock's Works, vol. iii. p. 395). Several independent witnesses confirm Peacock's statement.

hands over the fire. The lecture was dull and miserably attended; the man talked "about stones! about stones!" and so drily, said Shelley, with a downcast look and melancholy tone; he would never endure another lecture about stones. Again after supper the theme of chemistry and its wonders was taken up; the service it was destined to render to the race of man; the supply of unstinted stores of artificial food; the watering of arid African wastes by streams and lakes won from the elements by chemistry; the production of artificial heat in arctic climates, and for our poor during the cruel English winters; the mighty energies of the galvanic battery; the art of aerial navigation in balloons. Thus sped by the inspired hours, Shelley pacing the room with slow, prodigious strides, and when the mysteries of matter failed, descanting as eloquently on mysteries of mind—the analysis of the substance of the soul, a future state, pre-existence, personal identity—until the fire sank low and the candles glimmered in their sockets. "I lighted him downstairs," writes Hogg, "with the stump of a candle which had dissolved itself into a lamp, and I soon heard him running through the quiet quadrangle in the still night. That sound became afterwards so familiar to my ear, that I still seem to hear Shelley's hasty steps."

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A meeting in Shelley's rooms had been appointed for the afternoon of the ensuing day. An hour behind his time, Hogg arrived at two o'clock; but to the young chemist, absorbed in his experiments, it seemed still early morning. "I perceived," says Hogg, "that he took no note of time; if there was a virtue of which he was utterly incapable, it was that homely, but pleasing and useful one, punctuality." Shelley cowered over the fire, stricken with a chill, and oppressed, until the officious scout withdrew, by a fear that his rooms were to be put in order, and everything restored to its proper place. The rooms had been just papered and painted; carpet, curtains, and furniture were quite new; but the general air of freshness,

CHAP. II. observes Hogg, was greatly obscured by the indescribable confusion in which the various objects were mixed.\* “Books, boots, papers, shoes, philosophical instruments, clothes, pistols, linen, crockery, ammunition, and phials innumerable, with money, stockings, prints, crucibles, bags, and boxes, were scattered on the floor and in every place; as if the young chemist, in order to analyze the mystery of creation, had endeavoured first to reconstruct the primeval chaos. The tables, and especially the carpet, were already stained with large spots of various hues, which frequently proclaimed the agency of fire. An electrical machine, an air-pump, the galvanic trough, a solar microscope, and large glass jars and receivers, were conspicuous amidst the mass of matter. Upon the table by his side were some books lying open, several letters, a bundle of new pens, and a bottle of japan ink, that served as an inkstand; a piece of deal, lately part of the lid of a box, with many chips, and a handsome razor that had been used as a knife. There were bottles of soda-water, sugar, pieces of lemon, and the traces of an effervescent beverage. Two piles of books supported the tongs, and these upheld a small glass retort above an argand lamp. I had not been seated many minutes before the liquor in the vessel boiled over, adding fresh stains to the table, and rising in fumes with a disagreeable odour. Shelley snatched the glass quickly, and dashing it in pieces among the ashes under the grate, increased the unpleasant and penetrating effluvia.”

A collector exhibits with the pride of possession his well-ordered cabinet of coins, his scarce prints or precious copies of rare editions. Shelley did not gather, arrange, and possess; the objects which made up the chaos that surrounded him were means for bringing close to him the quick and mysterious

\* In what follows we may admire Hogg's retentiveness of memory, which enabled him after a score of years to define the position of every article that helped to make up chaos; but the impression left by the description is probably a faithful one, and it could have been conveyed by no other process so well as by Hogg's.

forces of nature as his guests or playfellows ; and he loved to feel that the chaos of his chambers was instinct with fiery life and pregnant with wonder. In a moment he was vehemently turning the handle of the electrical machine, making the sparks crackle and fly ; or stood on the insulating stool, charged with the fiery stream, his wild locks extravagantly dispread, while Hogg worked the apparatus. Or he discoursed eagerly of a method by which, with the aid of electrical kites, man might become master of the thunderstorm and lord of the clouds ; or passed on, forgetful of his declaration that literature is vain trifling, to speak with fervour of poets and poetry. "I participated in his enthusiasm," says Hogg, "and soon forgot the shrill and unmusical voice that had at first seemed intolerable to my ear. He was indeed a whole university in himself to me, in respect of the stimulus and incitement which his example afforded to my love of study."

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This meeting in Shelley's rooms confirmed an alliance between the two freshmen, who henceforth were inseparable. They spent almost every afternoon and evening together, at first from day to day, alternating from the rooms of the one to those of the other, but afterwards regularly resorting to the young mage and chemist's cell, where at any moment he could start from his seat, seize his phials, his magnet, or some scientific divining-rod, and "ascertain by actual experiment the value of some new idea that rushed into his brain." These chemical operations, says Hogg, seemed to an unskilled observer to promise nothing but disasters. "His hands, his clothes, his books, and his furniture were stained and corroded by mineral acids." Holes burnt in the carpet and enlarged by rents from the experimenter's foot revealed the scorched and blackened boards. Glasses, cups, and plates were used indiscriminately with crucibles, retorts, and receivers to contain his villanous liquids. "To his infinite diversion I used always to examine every drinking-vessel narrowly, and often to rinse it carefully, after that evening when we were taking tea by



CHAP. II. firelight; and my attention being attracted by the sound of something in the cup into which I was about to pour tea, I was induced to look into it. I found a seven-shilling piece partly dissolved by the *aqua regia* in which it was immersed." On the subject of chemistry, the wonders it was to effect for humanity, and generally with respect to physical research, Hogg remained irresponsive and sceptical, confirming his indifference by an utterance of Socrates in Xenophon's "Memorabilia." "Through lack of sympathy Shelley's zeal gradually cooled; and he applied himself to these pursuits, after a short time, less frequently and with less earnestness."

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After morning chapel (from which Shelley, as soon as the doors were opened, would retreat with precipitate speed), lectures, and some hours of private study, the friends would meet at one o'clock, and again in the evening after the public dinner in the hall. "I was enabled," writes Hogg, "to continue my studies in the evening in consequence of a very remarkable peculiarity. My young and energetic friend was then overcome by extreme drowsiness, which speedily and completely vanquished him; he would sleep from two to four hours, often so soundly that his slumbers resembled a deep lethargy; he lay occasionally upon the sofa, but more commonly stretched upon the rug before a large fire, like a cat; and his little round head was exposed to such a fierce heat, that I used to wonder how he was able to bear it. Sometimes I have interposed some shelter, but rarely with any permanent effect; for the sleeper usually contrived to turn himself, and to roll again into the spot where the fire glowed the brightest. His torpor was generally profound, but he would sometimes discourse incoherently for a long while in his sleep. At six he would suddenly compose himself, even in the midst of an animated narrative or of earnest discussion; and he would lie buried in entire forgetfulness, in a sweet and mighty oblivion, until ten, when he would suddenly start up, and rubbing his eyes with great violence, and passing his fingers

swiftly through his long hair, would enter at once into a vehement argument, or begin to recite verses, either of his own composition or from the works of others, with a rapidity and an energy that were often quite painful. During the period of his occultation I took tea, and read or wrote without interruption. He would sometimes sleep for a shorter time, for about two hours; postponing for the like period the commencement of his retreat to the rug, and rising with tolerable punctuality at ten; and sometimes, although rarely, he was able entirely to forego the accustomed refreshment." At ten, when he awoke, he was always ready for his supper, a meal which he enjoyed. After supper "his mind was clear and penetrating, and his discourse eminently brilliant." The students read each his own book, or more often read together, long discussions interrupting and prolonging their hours of study. When the college clock struck two Hogg would rise, in spite of Shelley's entreaty or remonstrance, and retire for the night.

Each afternoon, at one o'clock, Shelley and his companion were accustomed to sally forth for a walk. "It was his delight to strike boldly into the fields, to cross the country daringly on foot, as is usual with sportsmen in shooting; to perform, as it were, a pedestrian steeple-chase. He was strong, light, and active, and in all respects well suited to such exploits." Shelley's ordinary preparation for a rural walk, says Hogg, formed a very remarkable contrast with his mild aspect and pacific habits. "He furnished himself with a pair of duelling-pistols, and a good store of powder and ball; and when he came to a solitary spot, he pinned a card, or fixed some other mark upon a tree or a bank, and amused himself by firing at it: he was a pretty good shot, and was much delighted at his success." The duelling-pistols were handled with inconceivable carelessness, and Hogg, fearing some misadventure, would secretly abstract, when Shelley equipped himself for the field, the powder-flask or the flints; and thus,

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CHAP. II. after a time, the pistols, often found unserviceable, were left  
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Mar. 1811. at home. One day, on discovering the trick that had been played to render his weapons harmless, Shelley was seriously offended. He determined instantly to return to college for the flints and steel. "I tempted him, by the way, to try to define anger, and to discuss the nature of that affection of the mind; to which, as the discussion waxed warm, he grew exceedingly hostile in theory, and could not be brought to admit that it could possibly be excusable in any case." While the disputation *De Ira* proceeded, Shelley forgot his wrath and his purpose, and suffered himself to be led by the ingenious Hogg into another path towards another end and aim.

In these country walks Shelley loved to find himself among the woods, or on the banks of the Thames, or by the water-side of an old quarry-pond at the foot of Shotover Hill. On the edge of this pond "he would linger until dusk, gazing in silence on the water, repeating verses aloud, or earnestly discussing themes that had no connection with surrounding objects." He had not yet learnt the art of constructing paper-boats—afterwards the source of so much keen delight—but there was endless glee in skimming stones along the surface of the water, and counting the number of bounds and curvets that they made; or he would raise with both hands some rocky fragment or boulder and fling it forward, loudly exulting when the splash sprung high; then quietly pore with wide eyes upon the troubled waters until the last faint ring and ripple died away, and find in the circling wave, as Chaucer's eagle did long since, a resemblance to the behaviour of waves of air set in motion by a sound. Often Shelley would prolong his rambles until it was too late to return to dinner in the hall; he hated college gatherings, and was especially well pleased to escape this hour of public feeding. Then the expedition into the country might be one of many miles, and the two comrades would find their way home under the winter moon, or by sparkling starlight, and pass through

the silent streets of the city of colleges, in silver gleam or far-thrown shadow, to their beloved quadrangle of University College. The tragic or pathetic close of one such ramble must be told. A large dish of scalloped oysters stood hot and delicious within the fender for the hungry and frozen pedestrians. Bysshe united with a singular grace of action and gesture an occasional awkwardness almost as remarkable; down came his thoughtless feet upon the fender, and over flew the fragrant mess into the pile of cinders and ashes below the grate. Hogg's outburst of indignation was equal to the occasion, yet it was impossible, he tells us, to forbear smiling and forgiving the accident upon seeing "the whimsical air and aspect of the offender, as he held up with the shovel the long-anticipated food, deformed by ashes, coals, and cinders, with a ludicrous expression of exaggerated surprise, disappointment, and vexation." Presently a tankard of stout brown ale was provided, and a scanty supply of cheese somewhere discovered; but Shelley, in penitential mood, desiring to leave these good things to his famished and defrauded comrade, professed an insurmountable dislike to cheese—it offended his palate, it hurt his stomach. Accepting his proper share, Hogg resolutely refused to take more. Having ascertained that "I was inexorable," says the chronicler, "Shelley devoured the remainder, greedily swallowing not merely the cheese, but the rind also, after scraping it cursorily, and with a curious tenderness." And now they were languidly stretching their limbs before a pleasant blaze, when the host suddenly started from his seat, seized one of the candles, and walking on tiptoe about the room in profound silence, began a mysterious search. "It had occurred to him that a dessert had possibly been sent to his rooms whilst we were absent, and had been put away. He found the object of his pursuit at last, and produced some small dishes from the study—apples, oranges, almonds and raisins, and a little cake. These he set close together at my side of the table without speaking, but with a triumphant

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CHAP. II. look, yet with the air of a penitent making restitution and  
Apr. 1810- reparation, and then resumed his seat. The unexpected suc-  
Mar. 1811. cour was very seasonable; this light fare, a few glasses of  
negus, warmth, and especially rest, restored our lost vigour  
and our spirits." Whereupon tongues were loosed, and the  
friends spoke of their happy life, of universities, of what they  
might be, of what they were, until the night was late; and so  
the curtain falls upon this cheerful third act of the tragi-  
comedy of the scalloped oysters.

The inducements to study offered by college or university  
were few and slight; at least they operated but feebly on the  
freshman class. The tutors' lectures Shelley found dull and  
uninstructive; compositions were written and handed in by  
the students, but were never commended or censured—it was  
a question whether they were ever read. The undergraduate,  
if he pleased, might pass his years of professed study in  
chartered idleness, enlivened by such violent delights as those  
of the cock-pit and the prize-ring.\* Learning was neglected;  
discipline was decayed. At University College "in the even-  
ing unceasing drunkenness and continual uproar prevailed." Shelley, prone beyond all other men to admire, and with a  
youthful scholar's veneration for men of learning and genius,  
found little to admire or venerate among those who should  
have been the masters of his mind. If he sprang with an  
ingenuous eagerness to meet the advances of persons who had  
a just claim upon his sympathies, he was also "suddenly and  
violently repelled, like the needle from the negative pole of  
the magnet, by any indication of pedantry, presumption, or  
affectation." At Oxford as at Eton his closest friends were  
the books he loved. "The devotion, the reverence, the  
religion with which he was kindled towards all the masters  
of intellect," declares Hogg, "cannot be described. The

\* From the "Memoirs of Christopher North" (vol. i. p. 69) we learn that he, in many respects one of the Oxford *élite*, made acquaintance with cock-pit and prize-ring.

irreverent many cannot comprehend the awe, the careless CHAP. II.  
 apathetic worldling cannot imagine the enthusiasm, nor can Apr. 1810-  
 the tongue that attempts only to speak of things visible to Mar. 1811.  
 the bodily eye, express the mighty emotion that inwardly  
 agitated him, when he approached for the first time a volume  
 which he believed to be replete with the recondite and mystic  
 philosophy of antiquity; his cheeks glowed, his eyes became  
 bright, his whole frame trembled, and his entire attention was  
 immediately swallowed up in the depths of contemplation.”  
 But the writers who called forth his enthusiasm—and among  
 them were some of the greatest of ancient and of modern  
 literature—were those of his own choice. “You must read—  
 you must read,” repeated, in his small voice, a little man who  
 had sent for Shelley one morning to offer him advice with  
 reference to his studies. “I answered,” goes on Shelley, as  
 recorded in his friend’s pages, “that I had no objection. He  
 persisted; so, to satisfy him, for he did not appear to believe  
 me, I told him I had some books in my pocket, and I began  
 to take them out. He stared at me, and said that was not ex-  
 actly what he meant. ‘You must read “Prometheus Vincetus,”  
 and Demosthenes’ “De Corona,” and Euclid.’ ‘Must I read  
 Euclid?’ I asked sorrowfully. ‘Yes, certainly; and when  
 you have read the Greek works I have mentioned, you must  
 begin Aristotle’s “Ethics,” and then you may go on to his  
 other treatises. It is of the utmost importance to be well  
 acquainted with Aristotle.’ This he repeated so often that I  
 was quite tired, and at last I said, ‘Must I care about Aristotle?  
 What if I do not mind Aristotle?’”

Shelley did “mind Aristotle.” He took the scholastic  
 logic, says Hogg, very kindly, and seized its distinctions  
 with his accustomed quickness. So eager, bold, and un-  
 wearied a disputant could not but investigate with interest  
 the science of the form of thought. But “he rejected  
 with marvellous impatience every mathematical discipline  
 that was offered; no problem could awaken the slightest

CHAP. II. curiosity, nor could he be made sensible of the beauty of any theorem.”  
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To the grief of his legal-minded friend, he was equally insensible to the charms of jurisprudence, though at times he would listen with attention to questions of natural law, and always displayed the most acute sensitiveness to injustice, however slight. He read eagerly the marvellous tales of Eastern travellers, but as for Oriental tongues, he contented himself with observing that the appearance of the characters was curious. Nor was his an intellect which could spell out patiently the lessons of nature. It was Shelley's dream that man should seize the mysterious forces of nature and wield them for the uses of humanity—a dream which the century is bringing true; but he lacked the scientific habit of mind. He could not trammel his winged thoughts among innumerable details of structure and function, or compare and classify natural phenomena. “I was never able,” says Hogg, “to impart even a glimpse of the merits of Ray or Linnæus.” Method and classification were not Shelley's province; when he fixed his gaze upon external nature, he desired to penetrate in imagination through and beyond the sensible phenomena to living energies of which they are the manifestation, and to recreate a nobler world of dream—which is the reality of love—from these energies unimpeded by the cold obstruction of earth.

“He will watch from dawn to gloom  
 The lake-reflected sun illumine  
 The yellow bees in the ivy-bloom,  
 Nor heed nor see what things they be:  
 But from these create he can  
 Forms more real than living man,  
 Nurslings of immortality.”

At Oxford, as at Eton, Shelley's mind moved upon lines of its own; but its susceptibility was extreme to influences that were in any degree kindred to itself. “You must read,”

repeated the monitor of University College ; and no student ever read more ardently. "He was to be found, book in hand, at all hours ; reading in season and out of season ; at table, in bed, and especially during a walk ; not only in the quiet country and in retired paths ; not only at Oxford, in the public walks and High Street, but in the most crowded thoroughfares of London. Nor was he less absorbed by the volume that was open before him in Cheapside, in Cranbourne Alley, or in Bond Street, than in a lonely lane or a secluded library. Sometimes a vulgar fellow would attempt to insult or annoy the eccentric student in passing. Shelley always avoided the malignant interruption by slipping aside with his vast and quiet agility." More often he would glide through the throng, gazed at but unmolested, almost unconscious of his surroundings, "stooping low, with bent knees and outstretched neck, poring earnestly over the volume, which he extended before him." "I never beheld eyes," says Hogg, "that devoured the pages more voraciously than his ; I am convinced that two-thirds of the period of day and night were often employed in reading. It is no exaggeration to affirm that out of the twenty-four hours he frequently read sixteen. At Oxford his diligence in this respect was exemplary, but it greatly increased afterwards. . . . Few were aware of the extent, and still fewer, I apprehend, of the profundity of his reading ; in his short life, and without ostentation, he had in truth read more Greek than many an aged pedant, who, with pompous parade, prides himself upon this study alone. Although he had not entered critically into the minute niceties of the noblest of languages, he was thoroughly conversant with the valuable matter it contains. A pocket edition of Plato, of Plutarch, of Euripides, without interpretation or notes, or of the Septuagint, was his ordinary companion ; and he read the text straightforward for hours, if not as readily as an English author, at least with as much facility as French, Italian, or Spanish."

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CHAP. II. Shelley's learning at Oxford was not that of an exact scholar, but it had a rare vitality and serviceableness. He wrote, of course, the accustomed weekly exercise of his class—a Latin translation, it might be, of some paper in the *Spectator*. He composed Latin verses with extraordinary facility. "He would sometimes open at hazard a prose-writer, as Livy or Sallust, and by changing the position of the words, and occasionally substituting others, he would transmute several sentences from prose to verse—to heroic, or more commonly elegiac, verse, for he was peculiarly charmed with the graceful and easy flow of the latter—with surprising rapidity and readiness. He was fond of displaying this accomplishment," continues Hogg, "during his residence at Oxford, but he forgot to bring it away with him when he quitted the university." These were rather the recreation than the labours of the brain.

Although experimental science excited in Shelley's mind an imaginative curiosity, wonder, and delight, the only studies which constantly and completely engaged his interest were those of poetry and philosophy. Ideas as interpreting life and nature; emotions attached to such ideas; the beauty of the world; the beauty of human loves and joys and pains; and then, beyond and above these, the beauty which in high moments reveals itself in sudden gleams, a loveliness toward which we aspire and which we never can possess;—it was for these, and these alone, that Shelley cared supremely. History and human society he viewed through the medium of abstract principles, which drove him forward to action, as their envoy or champion; but to contemplate and to create was a deeper necessity of his nature than to strive and to reform. In Plato and the Greek tragedians he found teachers under whom he was never dull, indocile, or unhappy. At Oxford, indeed, he read Plato only in the French of Dacier, and an English translation from the French. At a later time he felt the radiance and breathed the air of Plato's genius, as though he

were himself a scholar in the garden at Colonus. Among CHAP. II.  
English writers he honoured our highest poet Shakspeare with Apr. 1810–  
the highest love; of his contemporaries he took a special Mar. 1811.  
delight in Landor, whose “Gebir” he would read aloud or to himself, says Hogg, with a tiresome pertinacity. “One morning I went to his rooms to tell him something of importance, but he would attend to nothing but ‘Gebir.’ With a young impatience I snatched the book out of the obstinate fellow’s hand, and threw it through the open window into the quadrangle.” “Well, you must allow,” said Landor, with his leonine laugh, on hearing the incident, “it is something to have produced what could please one fellow-creature and offend another so much.”

No poet has expressed more vividly than Shelley the wistful eagerness of the human spirit to interpret the riddle of the universe and unveil the mysteries of Whence? and Whither? and Wherefore? From an early date he interested himself in the reasonings and speculations of philosophy. Coming forth from the eighteenth century with an intellect which never shrank from questioning the beliefs of past ages, it was natural that he should find the guides and leaders of his mind in those eighteenth-century thinkers who had thrown down a challenge to the past, and promised in confident tones to open up new ways which should lead to a millennium of freedom and of light. Behind the French philosophical movement lay Hume and Locke. “The examination of a chapter of Locke’s ‘Essay concerning Human Understanding,’” writes Hogg, “would induce him, at any moment, to quit every other pursuit. We read together Hume’s ‘Essays,’ and some productions of Scotch metaphysicians of inferior ability—all with assiduous and friendly altercations. . . . We read also certain popular French works that treat of man, for the most part in a mixed method, metaphysically, morally, and politically. Hume’s ‘Essays’ was a favourite book with Shelley, and he was always ready to put forward in argument the doctrines

CHAP. II. they uphold." The sceptical philosophy, observes Hogg, Apr. 1810-  
Mar. 1811. though uncongenial with a fervid and imaginative genius, gave Shelley a vantage-ground as a disputant; and to question and contend was to his intellect like the breath of life. We may add that although his imagination in due time found its proper background of philosophy in a creed more resembling that of Spinoza than that of Helvetius, at first a creed in which sceptical negations formed an important element, acted perhaps not unfavourably on his imagination. That imagination was hardly of the robust and patient kind which toils in the material which the past has brought down to us, and reshapes it with plastic power; rather it loved to rear ideal fabrics, which the future was to convert from insubstantial palaces of dream to everlasting mansions for the happier race of men. It demanded a clear space wherein to operate. The French Revolution, sweeping away so many landmarks and crumbling structures of the past, and speeding onward with a dreadful voice of hope, created the very conditions which were most favourable to the free development of Shelley's imagination; he became, as it were, a portion of that passionate movement—its banner-bearer, who, like the Norman minstrel at Hastings, sang as he advanced to battle. But to be a portion of the Revolution meant that one had imbibed the critical philosophy which preceded, and in part inspired, the revolutionary movement.

With great audacity of intellect Shelley united a grave, earnest, and reverential spirit, a "meek seriousness" of heart, a "marvellous gentleness" of disposition. Amid the turbulent animalisms of young Oxford, he remained untouched by grossness; "the purity and sanctity of his life," says his closest friend, "were most conspicuous."\* Although Shelley's

\* "Fragile in health and frame, of the purest habits in morals," are Mrs. Shelley's words (note on "Queen Mab"). She speaks of Shelley "at seventeen," but is evidently thinking of the months at Oxford. Thornton Hunt said that he was aware of facts which gave him to understand that Shelley while at college, "in the tampering with venal pleasures," had seriously injured his health; and

seriousness permitted him now and again to indulge in some freak or elvish trick,\* and although he was "vehemently delighted by exquisite and delicate sallies," in which a fanciful or fantastic wit disported itself, he was offended, declares Hogg, "and indeed more indignant than would appear to be consistent with the singular mildness of his nature at a coarse and awkward jest, especially if it were immodest and uncleanly; in the latter case his anger was unbounded, and his uneasiness pre-eminent." It is obvious how such a jest would offend Shelley as an insult to the dignity and beauty of manhood, much as we might feel were we to see a visitor to our sculpture-galleries spit upon a statue of Dionysus or Apollo. "In no individual, perhaps," says Hogg, "was the moral sense ever more completely developed than in Shelley." With exceeding gentleness and refinement of feeling he united a generous indignation at the sight of cruelty or injustice; the indignant ardour, on his witnessing the infliction of pain, being "too vivid to allow him to pause and consider the probable consequences of the abrupt interposition of the knight-errantry which would at once redress all grievances." Hogg relates how one afternoon in Bagley Wood they came upon a boy driving a very young and very weak ass, overladen with a weight of fagots; the tyrant was belabouring his victim's lean ribs violently with a cudgel. Shelley did not, in Coleridge's manner, salute as his brother the "little foal of an oppressed race," and dream of transporting it to the dell of "mild equality;" he sprang forward, roused to an unusual degree of excitement, and was about to take action with indignant vehemence, when the

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that this was followed by a reaction "marked by horror." He gives no authority and no evidence in support of what seems to have been an inference of his own from certain facts unstated.

\* Once or twice he "attempted to electrify the son of his scout, a boy like a sheep, by name James, who roared aloud with ludicrous and stupid terror, whenever Shelley affected to bring by stealth any part of his philosophical apparatus near to him" (Hogg, "Life of Shelley," vol. i. p. 132).

CHAP. II. judicious Hogg interposed, and by legal methods of pleading

Apr. 1810— and cross-examination gained the cause of his long-eared client.  
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If, in later days, Shelley saw, or believed that he saw, an afflicted nation, overweighted and driven by the cudgel, the same zeal flamed, and again he sprang forward with the desire to deliver and to save, as he had done upon sight of the maltreated donkey of Bagley Wood. Such indiscreet, redeeming ardour is perhaps not so dangerously common that our wisdom need countervail it with a frown or sneer.

"The most docile, the most facile, the most pliant, the most confiding creature, that ever was led through any of the various paths on earth"—with such superlatives Hogg, apologizing for a description which looks like an unqualified panegyric, is constrained to place on record his impression of Shelley at Oxford. And again this keen-sighted, middle-aged man of the world writes: "As his port had the meekness of a maiden, so the heart of the young virgin, who has never crossed her father's threshold to encounter the rude world, could not be more susceptible of all the sweet domestic charities than his." And he goes on to declare that Shelley's excessive devotion to study and things of the intellect never chilled the heart or blunted the feelings. "He retained a most affectionate regard for his relations; . . . it was not without manifest joy that he received a letter from his mother or his sisters." But his charities were not merely domestic; they flowed forth wherever and whenever human suffering or sorrow made its appeal to his human pity and love. As a boy he would ride through the Sussex lanes and roads with Lucas, his father's steward. Young Bysshe "was so generous," said Lucas, "that if he met with any one in distress he would give lavishly, and if he had no money with him would borrow of me."\* "Out of a scanty and somewhat precarious income," writes Hogg, thinking of all the years of Shelley's life, not merely of the months at Oxford—"an income inadequate to allow the indulgence of the most ordinary superfluities, and

\* Dr. Sadler tells me this.

diminished by various casual but unavoidable incumbrances—  
 he was able, by restricting himself to a diet more simple than  
 the fare of the most austere anchorite, and by refusing himself  
 horses and the other gratifications that appear properly to  
 belong to his station, and of which he was in truth very fond,  
 to bestow upon men of letters, whose merits were of too high  
 an order to be rightly estimated by their own generation,  
 donations large indeed, if we consider from how narrow a  
 source they flowed.” But to speak of these acts of generosity  
 in detail would be a violation, adds Hogg, of the “unequalled  
 delicacy” of the donor.

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Gifts of love less costly, and bestowed on less distinguished  
 beneficiaries, reveal Shelley in as amiable and beautiful a light.  
 On an intensely cold afternoon, following a winter's morning  
 of bitter rain, Hogg and Shelley were climbing a hilly road  
 to the south-west of Oxford. “Near the summit Shelley  
 observed a female child leaning against the bank on the right.  
 It was of a mean, dull, and unattractive aspect, and older than  
 its stunted growth denoted. . . . The little girl was oppressed  
 by cold, by hunger, and by a vague feeling of abandonment.  
 It was not easy to draw from her blue lips an intelligible  
 history of her condition. Love, however, is at once credulous  
 and apprehensive, and Shelley immediately decided that she  
 had been deserted, and, with his wonted precipitation (for in  
 the career of humanity his active spirit knew no pause), he  
 proposed different schemes for the permanent relief of the poor  
 foundling, and he hastily inquired which of them was the most  
 expedient. I answered that it was desirable, in the first place,  
 to try to procure some food, for of this the want was manifestly  
 the most urgent. I then climbed the hill to reconnoitre, and  
 observed a cottage close at hand, on the left of the road. With  
 considerable difficulty—with a gentle violence, indeed—Shelley  
 induced the child to accompany him thither. After much  
 delay, we procured from the people of the place, who resembled  
 the dull, uncouth, and perhaps sullen, rustics of that district,

CHAP. II. some warm milk. It was a strange spectacle to watch the  
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Mar. 1811. young poet, whilst, . . . holding the wooden bowl in one hand and the wooden spoon in the other, and kneeling on his left knee, that he might more certainly attain to her mouth, he urged and encouraged the torpid and timid child to eat." Presently retracing their steps, they came upon the parents of the ill-grown and half-witted girl, while Shelley still bore the milk-bowl in his hand. Her father and mother had left her on the roadside to await their return, and had been long delayed. "So humble was the condition of these poor way-faring folk that they did not presume to offer thanks in words; but they often turned back, and with mute wonder gazed at Shelley, who, totally unconscious that he had done anything to excite surprise, returned with huge strides to the cottage to restore the bowl and to pay for the milk."

Shelley's love of children was early developed, and of unusual strength. He would pause in his swift course to admire the bright face of some cottage child; then sadden to think of what might be its future lot, what hereafter the piteous or sullen expression of that glad countenance. In a whimsical way he would apply the Platonic doctrine that all knowledge is reminiscence, so as to justify an interest in babyhood which is not a usual characteristic of undergraduate philosophers. Strolling one day in the neighbourhood of Oxford, he stood still to watch a bare-legged, bare-headed gipsy girl of six years old at her play of collecting snail-shells, and was struck by the intelligence of her wild and swarthy countenance and the glance of her fierce black eyes. "What an unworthy occupation (snail-shell gathering) for a person who once knew perfectly the whole circle of the sciences!" At this moment a ragged boy—guardian of his sister—emerged above the roadside bank, and brother and sister presently disappeared. Shelley was charmed with the intelligence and marvellous wildness of the pair. "He talked much about them, and compared them to birds, and to the two wild leverets

which that wild mother, the hare, produces." By-and-by the wild things came to view again, the boy bearing a bundle of sticks, unlawfully gathered, and dreading a rebuke or a blow. "Shelley's demeanour soon convinced him that he had nothing to fear. He laid a hand on the round, matted, knotted, bare, and black head of each, viewing their moving, mercurial countenances with renewed pleasure and admiration, and, shaking his long locks, suddenly strode away. 'That little ragged fellow knows as much as the wisest philosopher,' he cried, 'but he will not communicate any portion of his knowledge. It is not from churlishness, however, for of that his nature is plainly incapable; but the sophisticated urchin will persist in thinking he has forgotten all that he knows so well. I was about to ask him to communicate some of the doctrines Plato unfolds in his "Dialogues," but I felt that it would do no good. The rogue would have laughed at me, and so would his little sister.'" A day or two later the nomads were once more discovered amid a ragged group who sat hard by the gipsy tent, watching their steaming pot suspended over a fire of sticks. With a laughing salutation the children darted into the tent, and Shelley after them with his peculiar agility. "He placed a hand on each round, rough head, spoke a few kind words to the skulking children, and then returned not less precipitately, and with as much ease and accuracy as if he had been a dweller in tents from the hour when he first drew air and milk to that day." With Shelley's parting gift of a wonderful orange rolled to the young vagrants' feet the story ends.

"One morning," writes Hogg—and we must not curtail his recital in this instance—"we had been reading Plato together so diligently that the usual hour of exercise passed away unperceived. We sallied forth hastily to take the air for half an hour before dinner. In the middle of Magdalen Bridge we met a woman with a child in her arms. Shelley was more attentive at that instant to our conduct in a life that was past, or to come, than to a decorous regulation of the present,



CHAP. II. according to the established usages of society, in that fleeting moment of eternal duration styled the nineteenth century. With abrupt dexterity he caught hold of the child. The mother, who might well fear that it was about to be thrown over the parapet of the bridge into the sedgy waters below, held it fast by its long train. 'Will your baby tell us anything about pre-existence, madam?' he asked, in a piercing voice and with a wistful look. The mother made no answer, but perceiving that Shelley's object was not murderous, but altogether harmless, she dismissed her apprehension and relaxed her hold. 'Will your baby tell us anything about pre-existence, madam?' he repeated, with unabated earnestness. 'He cannot speak, sir,' said the mother seriously. 'Worse and worse,' cried Shelley, with an air of deep disappointment, shaking his long hair most pathetically about his young face; 'but surely the babe can speak if he will, for he is only a few weeks old. He may fancy perhaps that he cannot, but it is only a silly whim. He cannot have forgotten entirely the use of speech in so short a time; the thing is absolutely impossible.' 'It is not for me to dispute with you, gentlemen,' the woman meekly replied, her eye glancing at our academical garb; 'but I can safely declare I never heard him speak, nor any child of his age.' It was a fine, placid boy. So far from being disturbed by the interruption, he looked up and smiled. Shelley pressed his fat cheeks with his fingers; we commended his healthy appearance and his equanimity, and the mother was permitted to proceed, probably to her satisfaction, for she would doubtless prefer a less speculative nurse. Shelley sighed deeply as we walked on. 'How provokingly close are those new-born babes!' he ejaculated; 'but it is not the less certain, notwithstanding the cunning attempts to conceal the truth, that all knowledge is reminiscence. The doctrine is far more ancient than the times of Plato, and as old as the venerable allegory, that the Muses are the daughters of Memory; not one of the nine was ever said to be the child of Invention.'"

Whether this charming tale from Hogg's "Wahrheit und Dichtung" may be at all indebted to Invention as nursing-mother the reader must judge for himself.

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Shelley's kindly or fantastic familiarities with persons of a humbler social position than his own were helped, not hindered, by his high-bred courtesy of feeling and of manner. Although he was on paper and in discourse, says the aristocratic Hogg, a sturdy commonwealth-man, "the living, moving, acting individual had much of the senatorial and conservative, and was, in the main, eminently patrician." And again, "I have had the happiness to associate with some of the best specimens of gentlemen; but with all due deference for those admirable persons (may my candour and my preference be pardoned), I can affirm that Shelley was almost the only example I have yet found that was never wanting, even in the most minute particular, of the infinite and various observances of pure, entire, and perfect gentility." Yet with his grace of bearing was strangely united a certain awkwardness. "He would stumble in stepping across the floor of a drawing-room; he would trip himself up on a smooth-shaven grass plot, and he would tumble in the most inconceivable manner in ascending the commodious, facile, and well-carpeted staircase of an elegant mansion, so as to bruise his nose or his lip on the upper steps, or to tread upon his hands, and even occasionally to disturb the composure of a well-bred footman; on the contrary, he would often glide without collision through a crowded assembly, thread with unerring dexterity a most intricate path, or securely and rapidly tread the most arduous and uncertain ways." He always dressed "like a gentleman," says Hogg, "handsomely indeed," yet he conformed to the fashion only as far as it did not interfere with his own pleasure, so that there was, "it must be admitted, something of singularity in his appearance. His throat was often bare, the collar of his shirt open, in days when a huge neckcloth was the mode. Other men's heads, like those of private soldiers,

CHAP. II. were then clipped quite close; the poet's locks were long; Apr. 1810- which certainly was a singular phenomenon, and streaming Mar. 1811. like a meteor; and the air of his little round hat upon his little round head was troubled and peculiar." A predecessor of Shelley's at Oxford, Robert Southey, in days of the French Republic, when young Oxford wore the hair dressed and powdered, had awakened suspicions of his revolutionary ardour by appearing in hall, like Shelley, with his long locks untrimmed, and curling as nature had designed them. What may not the contents of a head be, whose exterior is so extravagant and uncontrolled?

Shelley, who "dressed like a gentleman," was for the most part wholly indifferent with respect to his suits and trappings. On one occasion it was otherwise. A certain blue coat with many glittering buttons, in which his friend discovered him one afternoon newly invested by the tailor, had strangely wrought upon Shelley's fancy and affection. Through lanes and byways the faithful chronicler, in his narrative, conducts Shelley, splendid in his blue and gold, until he stands a piteous object, despoiled of both skirts by the teeth of an ill-favoured farmyard mastiff who had opposed the wanderers' progress. "I never saw him so angry either before or since; he vowed that he would bring his pistols and shoot the dog, and that he would proceed at law against the owner. . . . 'Let us try to fancy, Shelley,' I said to him, as he was posting away in indignant silence, 'that we have been at Oxford, and have come back again, and that you have just laid the beast low—and what then?' He was silent for some time, but I soon perceived, from the relaxation of his pace, that his anger had relaxed also. At last he stopped short, and taking the skirts from his arm, spread them upon the hedge, stood gazing at them with a mournful aspect, sighed deeply, and after a few moments continued his march. 'Would it not be better to take the skirts with us?' I inquired. 'No,' he answered despondingly, 'let them remain as a spectacle for men and

gods.' We returned to Oxford, and made our way by back CHAP. II.  
streets to our college. As we entered the gates, the officious Apr. 1811-  
scout remarked with astonishment Shelley's strange spenser, Mar. 1811.  
and asked for the skirts, that he might instantly carry the  
wreck to the tailor. Shelley answered, with his peculiarly  
pensive air, 'They are upon the hedge.' The scout looked up  
at the clock, at Shelley, and through the gate into the street  
as it were at the same moment and with one eager glance, and  
would have run blindly in quest of them, but I drew the skirts  
from my pocket, and unfolded them, and he followed us to  
Shelley's rooms. We were sitting there in the evening, at  
tea, when the tailor, who had praised the coat so warmly in  
the morning, brought it back as fresh as ever, and apparently  
uninjured. It had been fine-drawn; he showed how skilfully  
the wound had been healed, and he commended at some  
length the artist who had effected the cure. Shelley was  
astonished and delighted; had the tailor consumed the new  
blue coat in one of his crucibles, and suddenly raised it, by  
magical incantation, a fresh and purple Phoenix from the  
ashes, his admiration could hardly have been more vivid." Himself lacking in mechanical ingenuity, and feeling slight curiosity about the skill of the various handicrafts, Shelley, if his attention were so directed, could watch with vivid delight the marvels of the plastic hand. It is Hogg's mischievous suggestion that the poet's ecstasy at sight of the fine-drawn skirts was the expression of a maker's ardour "in witnessing the display of the creative energies."

The friends, as has been mentioned, often eschewed the four-o'clock dinner in the hall, thus in part acquiring a reputation as unsocial and as affecting singularity. Shelley, it must be confessed, was deficient in true British devotion to the roast and boiled. His food "was plain and simple as that of a hermit, with a certain anticipation, even at this time, of a vegetable diet." He could have lived, says Hogg, thinking of a somewhat later time, "on bread alone without repining.

CHAP. II. When he was walking in London with an acquaintance, he  
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Mar. 1811. would suddenly run into a baker's shop, purchase a supply,  
and breaking a loaf he would offer half of it to his companion."

Much surprised and perplexed was Shelley if his offer were declined. "Do you know," he said one day to Hogg, with an air of wonder, "that such an one does not like bread!" In his pockets was to be found almost always some fragment of a loaf. "A circle upon the carpet, clearly defined by an ample verge of crumbs, often marked the place where he had long sat at his studies, his face nearly in contact with his book, greedily devouring bread at intervals amidst his profound abstractions. . . . Sometimes he ate with his bread the common raisins that are used in making puddings. . . . The common fruit of stalls, and oranges and apples, were always welcome to Shelley. Vegetables, and especially salads, and pies and puddings, were acceptable; his beverage consisted of copious and frequent draughts of cold water, but tea was ever grateful, —cup after cup—and coffee. Wine was taken with singular moderation, commonly diluted largely with water, and for a long period he would abstain from it altogether." But, observes Hogg, he retained his sweet tooth; "he would greedily eat cakes, gingerbread, and sugar; honey, preserved or stewed fruit with bread, were his favourite delicacies; these he thankfully and joyfully received from others, but he rarely sought for them, or provided them for himself. The restraint and protracted duration of a convivial meal were intolerable; he was seldom able to keep his seat during the brief period assigned to an ordinary family dinner." When the physiology of poets has been studied, we shall perhaps know why Wordsworth and Shelley were water-drinkers, why Keats loved an exquisite claret, why Southey soothed himself to sleep with a tumbler of domestic currant rum, why Byron in his later days craved the fierier and fiercer stimulants. Shelley's choice of food, until he became a doctrinaire on the subject of diet, was simple and instinctive. Gastronomy as a fine art had not

come within the range of his conceptions. "Poets' food," he has told us, "is love and fame," and for these aerial viands his appetite was excellent. Yet there may have been some wisdom in Peacock's prescription for certain ailments of the poet: "Three mutton chops, well peppered." His vegetarian diet, says Peacock, certainly did not agree with him; "it made him weak and nervous, and exaggerated the sensitiveness of his imagination." At Oxford, however, his fare, though temperate, was not meagre; he was, as Trelawny knew him in Italy, "like a healthy, well-conditioned boy." We find him vigorous, capable of enduring fatigue, and in the main happy; not troubled by nervous excitement or thick-coming fancies.

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One moment, however, in which some overpowering horror laid hold of Shelley's imagination, lived in his memory for years after he had left Oxford and her colleges behind him. In one of his prose fragments, written in 1815, Shelley is speaking of mental phenomena which seem to connect our sleeping and waking hours, and in particular of the transference, by some obscure process, of intense feelings from dreams to the realities of day. "The most remarkable event of this nature," he goes on, "which ever occurred to me, happened five years ago at Oxford. I was walking with a friend [probably Hogg] in the neighbourhood of that city, engaged in earnest and interesting conversation. We suddenly turned the corner of a lane, and the view, which its high banks and hedges had concealed, presented itself. The view consisted of a windmill, standing in one among many plashy meadows, enclosed with stone walls; the irregular and broken ground, between the wall and the road on which we stood; a long low hill behind the windmill, and a grey covering of uniform cloud spread over the evening sky. It was that season when the last leaf had just fallen from the scant and stunted ash. The scene surely was a common scene; the season and the hour little calculated to kindle lawless thought; it was a tame, uninteresting assemblage of objects, such as

CHAP. II. would drive the imagination for refuge in serious and sober talk, to the evening fireside, and the dessert of winter fruits and wine. The effect which it produced on me was not such as could have been expected. I suddenly remembered to have seen that exact scene in some dream of long——” At this point abruptly ends the fragment, to which is appended the note: “Here I was obliged to leave off, overcome by thrilling horror.” “I remember well,” writes Mary Shelley, “his coming to me from writing it, pale and agitated, to seek refuge in conversation from the fearful emotions it excited.” Amid such chasms from which a cruel horror might suddenly glance up, and fascinate him with eyes of prey, did Shelley’s footsteps move.

### CHAPTER III.

OXFORD (*continued*).

THE year 1810, which opened joyously for Shelley, had a cloudy and troubled close. There was trouble at home with his father, trouble with the publisher Stockdale, and more grievous trouble in the discovery that his letters to Harriet Grove had alarmed both her and her parents by their energetic unorthodoxy, and that it was quick growing to a certainty that she could never be his. At the end of Michaelmas Term—towards the middle of December—Hogg left Oxford for a clergyman's house in Buckinghamshire, and Shelley returned to spend the Christmas vacation at Field Place. As to authorship, things had not gone altogether ill with him since the unfortunate affair of "Victor and Cazire." The courageous publishers who had given forty pounds for "Zastrozzi" were not inclined to repeat the experiment in the instance of a second romance; but Stockdale, over whom Shelley, whether as a boy of genius or as heir to a great estate, exercised a certain charm, had been induced to undertake the publication, at the author's expense, of his new attempt—"St. Irvyne, or the Rosicrucian." The manuscript seems to have been ready by April 1, while Shelley was still an Eton schoolboy, for on that day he announces to his friend Graham that if "Jock" (perhaps Robinson, the publisher of "Zastrozzi") will not give him "a devil of a price for his poem," and at least sixty pounds for his "New Romance in three volumes, the dog shall not have

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them.”\* By autumn the author had lowered his demands ; it were enough if Stockdale would consent to fit the romance for the press, and put his name upon the title-page. “As it is a thing which almost *mechanically* sells to circulating libraries, etc.,” writes Shelley, who at this time had a good knack at hoping, “I would wish it to be published on my *own* account.” In the dark November and December days many longing thoughts travelled from University College to 41, Pall Mall. What compositors ever kept pace with a young author’s desires ? The question, “When do you suppose ‘St. Irvyne’ will be out ?” changes in a fortnight to the plaintive cry, “When *does* ‘St. Irvyne’ come out ?”

Meanwhile the poet “Victor” had begotten a son, “Fitz-Victor.” On November 17, 1810, the *Oxford University and City Herald* informed its readers that for two shillings might be obtained from Mr. J. Munday, the Oxford publisher, “Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson ; being poems found amongst the Papers of that noted female, who attempted the life of the King in 1786. Edited by John Fitz-Victor.” One morning, when Hogg had called at Shelley’s rooms, the young author was discovered busily occupied in correcting and recorrecting with anxious care some proofs which lay before him. Suddenly throwing a paper on the middle of the table, he said “in a penetrating whisper as he sprang eagerly from his chair, ‘I am going to publish some poems.’” Hogg—sagacious critic—took the proofs and examined them ; there were some good lines, some bright thoughts, but many irregularities and incongruities. The critic was faithful in pointing out errors and defects. “In their present form you do not think the poems ought to be published ?” asked Shelley that evening, on waking from his after-dinner sleep. “Only as burlesque poetry,” answered Hogg, who went on to

\* The letter to Graham is printed in Mr. Forman’s “Shelley Library,” i. p. 5. We cannot be certain that the “new romance” is “St. Irvyne,” but it seems probable.

show by an example how easily the poems would lend themselves to parody. A few strokes of the pen and he had effected the transformation of one piece. Shelley read it aloud in a ridiculous tone, was amused by the grotesque disguise, and abandoned his intention of publication. From day to day the pair of friends amused themselves in idle moments by making the poems "more and more ridiculous; by striking out the more sober passages, by inserting whimsical conceits;" and especially by giving them what they called a dithyrambic character. And now the poems seemed sufficiently absurd to present themselves abroad seeking the praise of folly. But what title should the collection bear? At times they thought of ascribing its authorship to some one of the chief living poets, or some grave man of learning and letters. Finally a bright idea flashed through the brain of Hogg. Peg Nicholson, the mad washerwoman who had attempted to stab King George III. with a carving-knife, was still living in Bedlam. As Swift had killed the astrologer Partridge, so it was resolved that "that noted female," Margaret Nicholson, should depart this life, and that a nephew and administrator, John Fitz-Victor, should be created to serve as editor of his aunt's posthumous poetical fragments. "The idea," says Hogg, "gave an object and purpose to our burlesque—to ridicule the strange mixture of sentimentality with the murderous fury of revolutionists, that was so prevalent in the compositions of the day." The jest pleased the publisher, and in a few days a quarto pamphlet of verse, with noble type and ample margins, was for sale on Mr. Munday's counter; the name "John Fitz-Victor" stood illustrious on the title-page in those Old English characters which Southey had introduced on the title-page of "Thalaba." Shelley gazed in an ecstasy of delight at the superb form in which his jest rose glorified. Nobody, says Hogg, suspected or could suspect who was the author; the copies which remained, after "John Fitz-Victor" had presented a certain number to mystified friends, were "rapidly

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III. sold at the aristocratical price of half a crown for half a dozen  
Oct. 1810— pages. We used to meet gownsmen in High Street reading  
Mar. 1811. the goodly volume as they walked—pensive with a grave and  
sage delight. . . . It was, indeed, a kind of fashion to be seen  
reading it in public, as a mark of a nice discernment, of a  
delicate and fastidious taste in poetry, and the very criterion  
of a choice spirit.” \*

Such is Hogg’s account of Shelley’s first literary venture at Oxford, and it is a pity that so good a story should be spoilt. But there is probably as much of the writer’s “*Dichtung*” as of his “*Wahrheit*” in the narrative. When we examine the pieces which make up the thin quarto, we come upon one—the fragment “supposed to be an epithalamium of Francis Ravailac and Charlotte Cordé”—which is obviously a burlesque; the remaining poems appear probably as Shelley first wrote them, and are certainly neither worse nor better than other pieces written by him, in all seriousness, about the same date.† The Oxford gownsmen must have been in sore need of a jest, or have had a rare appetite for silly versifyings, if they freely exchanged their half-crowns for Peg Nicholson’s lucubrations. But we may believe better things of them, for the publisher, Slatter, of the firm of Munday and Slatter, describes the “*Posthumous Fragments*” as “a work almost still-born.” He adds what is of more interest, for it gives us a momentary glimpse of Shelley at Oxford through other eyes than those of our chief witness: “The ease with which Shelley composed many of the stanzas therein contained is truly astonishing.

\* It appears from a letter printed in the “*Diary Illustrative of the Times of George the Fourth*,” that Shelley was known to be the author of the volume. He himself, in a letter to Graham, says, “It sells wonderfully here, and is become the fashionable subject of discussion” (November 30, 1810). The part of the Epithalamium from the end of Satan’s triumph is, Shelley says, “the production of a friend’s *mistress*; it is omitted in numbers of the copies—that which I sent to my mother of course did not contain it.”

† I have had the opportunity of seeing some unpublished poems written by Shelley while at Oxford. It should be noted that Hogg states that the first of Margaret Nicholson’s fragments was a piece of verse “confided to Shelley by some rhymster of the day,” and printed as a jest.

When surprised with a proof from the printers in the morning he would frequently start off his sofa, exclaiming that that had been his only bed; and on being informed that the men were waiting for more copy, he would sit down and write off a few stanzas, and send them to the press without even revising or reading them. This I have myself witnessed." Perhaps the quality of the stanzas thus written may somewhat detract from the miracle of their instant creation.

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"When *does* 'St. Irvyne' come out?" sighed Shelley on the 2nd of December. After little more than one impatient fortnight his eyes were gratified with the sight of Stockdale's advertisement—probably the same which appeared later in the *Times*. "The University Romance.—This day is published, price only 5s., *St. Irvyne, or the Rosicrucian: a Romance*. By a Gentleman of Oxford University." "I saw your advertisement of the Romance," writes Stockdale's happy client, "and approve of it highly; it is likely to excite curiosity." It was certainly an ingenious thought of the publisher to announce the fantastic absurdities of an Oxford freshman as a representative piece of imaginative work from the university; but curiosity was not roused from its trance or torpor. The one slight notice of the book which has been discovered in review or magazine is vigorously contemptuous, and closes with the aspiration, "Would that this gentleman of Oxford had a taste for other and better pursuits; but as we presume him to be a *young* gentleman, this may in due time happen." \* "St. Irvyne"—so named apparently because Godwin had written a "St. Leon"—is perhaps less crude in style than "Zastrozzi," and is certainly less coherent in plot and incidents. Indeed, it readily falls asunder into two stories, feebly linked together by a paragraph at the close. This circumstance, together with various awkward turns of expression, which look like imperfect renderings from the German, has led Mr. Forman to conjecture that in "St. Irvyne" Shelley was less

\* The *British Critic*, January, 1811, p. 70.

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author than translator, and that two German tales are tacked together in the English romance. The conjecture receives some confirmation from the statement of a sufficiently trustworthy, though anonymous, writer, that he had received from Shelley, as a token of remembrance, the manuscript of three tales, one original—probably “Zastrozzi”—the other two translations from the German. “They were of a very wild and romantic description,” he adds, “but full of energy.”\* In a letter from Shelley to Hogg (as printed in the “Life of Shelley” by his friend) occurs the enigmatic sentence, “Why will you compliment ‘St. Irvyn’? I never saw Delisle’s, but mine must have been pla——” Shall we complete the word?—“plagiarized.” And does Shelley mean that his German original must have been plagiarized from some romance or drama by Delisle? Shelley, indeed, at this date, if he knew German at all, knew too little to translate a novel into English. Is it possible that he may have received assistance from Graham, whose music-master, Woelfl, may have led him to form some acquaintance with the German language? “Yours and my name,” wrote Shelley to Graham on September 3, “shall stand linked as friends to posterity, both in verse and in prose.” Whether translation or original, “St. Irvyne,” together with “Zastrozzi,” throws light upon the temperament and crude, excitable imagination of the Eton schoolboy and Oxford freshman. At all times what was strange and wonderful delighted Shelley; but in after years it was the wonder and strangeness of the beauty and terror which manifest themselves through sea and sky, through love and death, through the highest hopes and fears of humanity. As a boy he had but little sense of these finer, yet most real, springs of rapture and of awe; at

\* See Mr. Forman’s preface to his edition of Shelley’s Prose Works (vol. i. xiv–xvii). Shelley’s acquaintance referred to above is the anonymous “Newspaper Editor,” who contributed reminiscences of Shelley to *Fraser’s Magazine*, June, 1841. Trustworthy this writer is, inasmuch as he writes with an evident desire to state facts truly; but writing thirty years after the events related, his memory sometimes misleads him.

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the same time, he was unable to interest himself in the everyday, commonplace aspect of things; and thus he was driven to find food for his appetite for the marvellous in fantastic horrors and violent travesties of human passion. These, for the time being, were all in all to Shelley. His vision, grotesquely absurd though it might be, dominated him, and he had by him no standard of reality by which to measure its remoteness from the truth of nature. An extraordinary imagination runs greater risks than one of average power, and is perhaps more difficult to educate. With Shelley the process of imaginative education was carried on by a series of self-directed experiments—experiments at first inconceivably wild and ineffective. Yet through them all he was feeling after and finding his way. It was, in part at least, by virtue of the same ardour which impelled him at eighteen to body forth his crude conceptions in extravagant romance that he had achieved before thirty his high-wrought and daring masterpieces in verse. “Prometheus Unbound” might suffice to make amends for many a boyish “Zastrozzi” or “St. Irvyne.”

“About this time,” says the publisher, Stockdale, “not merely slight hints, but constant allusions, personally and by letters, . . . rendered me extremely uneasy respecting Mr. Shelley’s religious, or indeed irreligious, sentiments.” Possibly he was also not quite at ease with respect to the bill due to him for the publication of the “University Romance.” He had been charmed by Shelley’s frank, enthusiastic manner, joined with an unusual docility in profiting by suggestions as to the conduct of his tale; and he fully believed in Shelley’s honour and integrity. But the young man was dependent on his father; and Mr. Timothy Shelley, who appeared to Stockdale, in the few conversations which took place in the shop, “not particularly bright,” and “inclined to exercise the parental authority with most injudicious despotism,” declared that his son was not of age, and “that he, his father, would never pay a farthing” of the bill. It was Stockdale’s interest to keep on

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good terms, if possible, with the son; but, even at the risk of a breach with “young Mr. Shelley,” to keep on good terms with the elder Mr. Shelley, who held the purse-strings, and seemed disposed to draw them tight. If Stockdale could render an important service to Mr. Timothy Shelley without doing a wrong to Mr. Percy, all might be well. The youth was entering on dangerous ways; he had spoken to Stockdale of the manuscript of “a metaphysical essay in support of atheism, which he intended to promulgate throughout the university;” and of a novel in preparation “principally constructed to convey metaphysical and political opinions by way of conversation.” What could be more dutiful than to warn a father of the risks incurred by an amiable and enthusiastic son; and how touching the appeal to a father’s gratitude and sense of justice if the son—a visionary youth, well-meaning, but too easily led astray—were discovered, as it were, placed between his good and evil angel on the right hand and the left; his good angel Mr. Publisher Stockdale, his worser spirit a certain college companion with a mind “infinitely beneath that of his friend”—Mr. Jefferson Hogg! Fortunately it was possible to gather evidence against Hogg; for Mrs. Stockdale came from Lynnington Dayrell, Buckinghamshire, where Hogg was spending his Christmas vacation, and she could by letter play the part of female detective. The result of her inquiry was that no doubt remained in the mind of the virtuous Stockdale \* that if he did not “rush forward, and, however rudely, pull” Shelley “from the precipice over which he was suspended by a hair, his fate must be inevitable.”

We have anticipated events by a few days; for to inculcate Hogg seems to have been Stockdale’s happy afterthought. But “St. Irvyne” had scarcely appeared when the first note of alarm was sounded in Mr. Timothy Shelley’s hearing. Possibly the afflicted father had also happened to see a notice of “Zastrozzi” in the *Critical Review* for November, in which

\* Afterwards notorious as the publisher of infamous books.

its unknown author was taken severely to task as an offender against morality and a corrupter of youth. We know for certain that Mr. Shelley forthwith despatched a letter from London to his son at Field Place, doubtless well meant, probably ill conceived and injudicious, one of those epistles of mingled tenderness and bluster, expressed in incoherent sentences where verbs helplessly appeal for nominatives, and nouns wander in search of verbs, such as we know through examples presented by Hogg. Shelley in an excited mood read his father's letter, and imagined that every man's hand, save his friend Hogg's, was against him. "My father wrote to me, and I am now surrounded, environed by dangers, to which compared the devils who besieged St. Anthony were all inefficient. They attack me for my detestable principles. I am reckoned an outcast; yet I defy them, and laugh at their ineffectual efforts. . . . My father wished to withdraw me from college: I would not consent to it. There lowers a terrific tempest; but I stand, as it were, on a pharos, and smile exultingly at the vain beating of the billows below."\* Three weeks later (January 11, 1811), after Mr. Timothy Shelley had returned from town to spend part of the Parliamentary recess with his family, Shelley again writes to Hogg: "I attempted to enlighten my father, *mirabile dictu!* He for a time listened to my arguments; he allowed the impossibility (considered abstractedly) of any preternatural interferences by Providence. He allowed the utter incredibility of witches, ghosts, legendary miracles. But when I came to *apply* the truths on which we had agreed so harmoniously he started at the bare idea of some facts generally believed never having existed, and silenced me with an equine argument, in effect with these words: 'I believe, because I do believe.'

"My mother imagines me to be in the high-road to Pande-

\* Shelley to Hogg, as printed in Hogg's "Life of Shelley," i. p. 142. The date of the letter is December 20, 1810.



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monium; she fancies I want to make a deistical coterie of all my little sisters. How laughable!"\*

Only a very light-tempered or a very inexperienced person can fail to understand the trouble and difficulty of a father and mother with a son possessed by ideas which they regard as fraught with evil for himself and others. But there was in Shelley so much gentleness and so much generosity, that though his intellect might take its own way, his heart could always have been guided safely by wisdom and by love. Unhappily he was dealt with as a suspected and dangerous person, and was driven in upon himself to sustain and strengthen his spirit in opposition. To himself he appeared as one who suffered because he had dared to pursue truth wherever it might lead him; and he felt bitterly that intolerance was destroying the sweetest and most precious relations of life. It would have been a consolation if he could have turned in distress to his cousin Harriet, have shared his griefs and anxieties with her, and found a refuge from calamity in her affection. But she too had taken alarm, and was joined, as he conceived, with the rest against him. To troubles in his home circle were added the pangs of despised love. At eighteen few of us are cynics, and at no period of life was Shelley cynical; the loss of love was a loss which for the time seemed to make existence worthless to him, and the world desolate. It is not easy to ascertain the reality or measure the depth of a boy's passion. We elders, whose roots have grasped the soil so firmly and intertwined inextricably beneath the flowers and graves, are apt to smile at the first sorrow of lad or lass, as though it were some insubstantial creature of the element, which has no touch of our afflictions. But the strangeness and novelty of pain, and the uncertainty as to how the heart will behave under suffering, must be set over against our stronger anguish as elements which add to the trials of youth; and against the rending of habitual ties

\* As printed in Hogg's "Life of Shelley," i. pp. 164, 165.

must be set the torments of overwrought imagination. With Shelley the twofold misery of domestic strife and disappointed love sufficed to throw his whole nature into a state of nervous agitation; and the letters to Hogg, which were written in rapid succession during the days of the Christmas vacation, tremble and palpitate and thrill with vehement and hectic feeling. The mirth and jollity of the season are an affliction to him; he wanders alone in the snow, and is "cold, wet, and mad." "Pardon, pardon," he exclaims, "my delirious egotism." He encloses a poem to his friend, suggested by "an icicle on the grass of a grave," and apologizes for the bad handwriting, for he is very cold, as he has been most of the night pacing a churchyard.\* He meditates the problem of Hamlet when weary of existence: "To be, or not to be?"

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"[December 28, 1810.] Oh, here we are in the midst of all the uncongenial jollities of Christmas, when you are compelled to contribute to the merriment of others—when you are compelled to live under the severest of all restraints, concealment of feelings, pregnant enough in themselves. How terrible is your lot! I am learning abstraction, but I fear that my proficiency will be but trifling. I cannot, dare not, speak of myself. Why do you still continue to say, Do not despond, that you must not despair?"

"[January 3, 1811.] I am afraid there is selfishness in the passion of love, for I cannot avoid feeling every instant as if my soul was bursting; but I *will* feel no more. It is selfish. I would feel for others, but for myself—oh! how much rather would I expire in the struggle! Yes, that were a relief! Is suicide wrong? I slept with a loaded pistol and some poison last night, but did not die."

"[January 6, 1811.] Forsake her! Forsake one whom I

\* "On an Icicle that clung to the Grass of a Grave" is the correct title of the stanzas printed by Mr. Rossetti and Mr. Forman as "The Tear."

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loved! Can I? never! But she is gone—she is lost to me for ever; for ever! There is a mystery which I dare not to clear up; it is the only point on which I will be reserved to you. I have tried the methods you would have recommended. I followed her. I would have followed her to the ends of the earth, but—— If you value the little happiness which yet remains, do not mention again to me sorrows which, if you could share in, would wound a heart, which it now shall be my endeavour to heal of those pains, which through sympathy with me it has already suffered.” \*

The conviction that all was over between himself and Harriet Grove did not come to Shelley in a moment, but forced itself gradually upon him. At first it was the bitter-sweet of love that he tasted; with his anxious fears was mingled enough of hope to make the pain itself a precious possession. Though his cousin's disposition was “divested of that enthusiasm” by which his own was characterized, still she might not be indifferent towards him. He sees grounds for her hesitation, and can almost plead in her behalf. To attach herself to him she must be prepared to encounter “the opprobrium of the world,” and the coldness or contempt of her own kin. Was it not natural, he argued, that she should have some doubts, some fears, with respect to his opinions? “Besides,” he adds, “when in her natural character, her spirits are good, her conversation animated, and she was almost in consequence ignorant of the refinements in love, which can only be attained by solitary reflection.” His sister Elizabeth attempted to plead his cause, but unsuccessfully. Harriet gave a discreet reply—how could she be certain that Shelley was in reality the exalted being whom his sister had fondly described? Without doubt he had idealized herself, and only disappointment were in store for him if he should come to

\* The above passages are from letters as printed in Hogg's “Life of Shelley,” vol. i.

know her truly. At the close of the year 1810, Shelley seems to have sought and obtained a personal interview with his cousin, but the result was only a confirmation of his fears. "I am but just returned to Field Place from an inefficient effort," he wrote to Hogg on January 2. "Why do you, my happy friend, tell me of perfection in love? Is she not gone? And yet I breathe, I live! But adieu to egotism; I am sick to death at the very name of *self*." A few days later came the tidings that Harriet's promise of love and fidelity was already given to another. "She is gone! She is lost to me for ever! She married! Married to a clod of earth; she will become as insensible herself; all those fine capabilities will moulder. Let us speak no more of the subject. Do not deprive me of the little remains of peace which yet linger; that which arises from endeavours to make others happy" (January 11, 1811).\*

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Such portion of Shelley's pain as transformed itself into wrath was directed against neither Harriet, nor her kinsfolk, nor his own father; but it shot forth vehemently, like an eager tongue of flame, against an abstraction. It was not they, but the blind and evil spirit of "Intolerance," which had wrought havoc among his hopes. Why should he not think, and reason, and hold whatever opinions seemed best supported by evidence? Why should the theological beliefs or disbeliefs at which he had honestly arrived be held to disqualify him as a son, a brother, a lover? Yet so it was, and Shelley longed to avenge himself on the destroyer of his peace of mind, "the wretch Intolerance," who had robbed him of the pure joys of home and the sacred influences of love. "Here I swear," he writes to Hogg in an excited strain, "and as I break my oaths, may Infinity, Eternity, blast me—here I swear that never will

\* I follow Peacock in emending the words of Shelley's letter, as printed by Hogg—"She is married" to "She married!" Miss Grove's marriage to Mr. Helyar did not take place, I believe, until the autumn of 1811. On October 28, 1811, Shelley wrote from York to Charles Grove: "How do you like Mr. Helyar? A new brother as well as a new cousin [Shelley's bride was the new cousin] must be an invaluable acquisition."

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I forgive intolerance! It is the only point on which I allow myself to encourage revenge; every moment shall be devoted to my object which I can spare; and let me hope that it will not be a blow which spends itself, and leaves the wretch at rest—but lasting, long revenge! I am convinced, too, that it is of great disservice to society—that it encourages prejudices which strike at the root of the dearest, the tenderest, of its ties. Oh! how I wish I were the avenger! that it were mine to crush the demon; to hurl him to his native hell, never to rise again, and thus to establish for ever perfect and universal toleration. I expect to gratify some of this insatiable feeling in poetry. You shall see—you shall hear—how it has injured me. She is no longer mine! She abhors me as a sceptic, as what *she* was before. Oh, bigotry! When I pardon this last, this severest of thy persecutions, may heaven (if there be wrath in heaven) blast me!” (January 2, 1811).

During these days of wintry cold without, and of fever at the heart, Shelley turned for support and consolation to his sister Elizabeth, and to his friend Hogg. And finding something to appease his spirit in “the endeavour to make others happy,” he amiably resolved that Hogg should forthwith fall in love with Elizabeth, whom he had never seen, and that Elizabeth should be less unkind to his friend than Harriet Grove had proved to himself. “Believe me, my dear friend,” he writes to Hogg (December 28, 1810), “that my only ultimate wishes *now* are for your happiness and that of my sisters.” A week later, after his fruitless interview with Harriet, and in days when the thought of suicide was present to his mind—days when Elizabeth, alarmed for his safety, would watch him narrowly, accompanying him in his walks with his dog and gun—he writes again: “I could not come on Monday, my sister would not part with me; but I must—I will see you soon. My sister is now comparatively happy; she has felt deeply for me. Had it not been for her—had it not been for a sense of what I owed to her, to *you*, I should

have bidden you a final farewell some time ago. But can the dead feel; dawns any day-beam on the night of dissolution?" At this moment it was impossible to invite Hogg to Field Place, for Stockdale's representations had strongly prejudiced Mr. Timothy Shelley against his son's Oxford companion. But Shelley hoped that a meeting between the lovers designate might somehow or another soon take place; and meanwhile he informs his friend, "I read most of your letters to my sister. She frequently inquires after you, and we talk of you often." To dissipate her melancholy Shelley kept her "as much as possible employed in poetry;" and her verses on the bombardment of Copenhagen were duly despatched by her brother to Hogg—verses as limp and incoherent as Shelley's own of the same date (which is saying much), and inspired by the like generous sentiments:—

"All are brethren, and even the African bending  
To the stroke of the hard-hearted Englishman's rod,  
The courtier at Luxury's palace attending,  
The senator trembling at Tyranny's nod,"

with more in the same strain. "I like the composition very much," writes Shelley, "if a brother may be allowed to praise a sister." But Hogg must keep himself sane, and is not to imagine her as a being altogether divine. "When you examine her character you will find humanity, not divinity, amiable as the former may sometimes be. However I, as a brother, must not write treason against my sister, so I will check my volubility." Elizabeth's admiration was no doubt claimed for the "extremely beautiful" poetry written by Hogg—poetry which "touches the heart," in which Shelley is metamorphosed into an oak, and his faithless cousin into the ivy destroying that hardy tree. "You have not said," writes Shelley, remembering his cousin's engagement of marriage, "that 'the ivy, after it had destroyed the oak, as if to mock the miseries which it caused, twined around a pine which stood near.'" Though the poetry sent by Hogg was extremely beautiful, what

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Shelley especially desired was that he should publish a tale. "I shall then give a copy to Elizabeth, unless *you* forbid it."

For the present he has to accept, in lieu of the tale, a little essay on perfectibility of man, or some such theme, with a letter from Hogg concerning Elizabeth, "dictated by the most generous and disinterested of motives," in which the writer consents to accept a share in promoting her "intellectual improvement." Shelley had smiled at his mother's fancy that he wanted to make a deistical coterie of all his little sisters; and justly, for with all his outcry against intolerance, he did not choose to shock rudely the faith of Elizabeth, the nearest of his sisters to himself in years and in sympathy. "I do not wish," he writes, "to awaken her intellect too powerfully; this must be my apology for not communicating all my speculations to her." But to one of Hogg's talents and attainments the guidance of her mind might be gratefully entrusted.

In truth, although Shelley at this period had departed from the paths of traditional belief, he had not found for himself an assured way. "Reason," to follow "reason"—this was the watchword of his intellect; while at the same time his imagination demanded the presence of a Spirit of Life throughout the universe, and his heart craved communion with a Spirit of Love. "The word 'God,'" he writes to Hogg (January 3, 1811), "a vague word, has been, and will continue to be, the source of numberless errors until it is erased from the nomenclature of philosophy." But the soul of the universe, intelligent and necessarily beneficent—"this it is impossible not to believe in. I may not be able to adduce proofs; but I think that the leaf of a tree, the meanest insect on which we trample, are in themselves arguments more conclusive than any which can be advanced, that some vast intellect animates infinity. If we disbelieve *this*, the strongest argument in support of the existence of a future state instantly becomes annihilated. I confess that I think Pope's

'All are but parts of one stupendous whole'

something more than poetry." And he goes on to imagine as the future punishment of the vicious soul a thralldom in some prison-house as dull and cold as the body which it now inhabits; and as the reward of the virtuous, love infinite in extent, eternal in duration, and for ever progressing in purity and passion. "But can we suppose that this reward will arise spontaneously as a necessary appendage to our nature, or that our nature itself could be without cause—a first cause—a God?" Only he will not admit that this God—the soul and centre of the universe—is the almighty tyrant of "Faber, Rowland Hill," and others of the "Armageddon heroes." "I love what is superior, what is excellent, or what I conceive to be so; and I wish, ardently wish, to be profoundly convinced of the existence of a Deity, that so superior a spirit might derive some degree of happiness from my feeble exertions; for 'love is heaven, and heaven is love.' . . . Stay! I have an idea. I think I can prove the existence of a Deity—a First Cause." Whereupon follows proof, to which is appended the remark that we must represent this Being to ourselves by conceptions of wisdom, love, fostering care, derived from our own nature and applied by way of analogy to that of God. "Oh that this Deity," Shelley breaks forth, "were the soul of the universe, the spirit of universal, imperishable love! Indeed, I believe it is." To live by admiration, hope, and love is a necessity with such a nature as that of Shelley; even while accepting as true the teaching of French materialist philosophers, he could not dwell in a world devoid of spirit, but must needs endow matter with the attributes of mind, thus by a process of levelling-up obtaining for himself that spiritual environment without which his genius could not breathe the breath of life.

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"Do you find that the public are captivated by the title-page of 'St. Irvyne'?" asked Shelley of Stockdale, in a letter of January 11. It was the last friendly word uttered by Shelley to his publisher. Two or three days later he learnt



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that Stockdale had been making free with the character of his friend; and at the same time Mr. Timothy Shelley arrived home from London, surprising his son with praises of Hogg. "Your principles," writes Shelley to his friend, "are *now* as divine as before they were diabolical. . . . [My father] has desired me to make his compliments to you, and to invite you to make Field Place your head-quarters for the Easter vacation. I hope you will accept of it. I fancy he has been talking in town to some of the northern members of Parliament who are acquainted with your family." Unhappy Stockdale! Indignant letters from Hogg, indignant letters from Shelley, curt and cold words from Mr. Timothy Shelley, a bill unpaid, and the public *not* "captivated by the title-page of 'St. Irvyne'"—such were the rewards of his officious virtue. "The consequence was, as but too often happens," wrote the afflicted intermeddler, "that all concerned became inimical to me. I had satisfied my own feelings at the expense of my purse." Three months later Shelley sent for his account, but the publisher delayed to make it out. At length, in August, the bill found its way to Radnorshire, where Shelley was spending part of the summer. "The state of my finances," he wrote in reply, "renders immediate payment perfectly impossible. It is my intention, at the earliest period in my power to do so, to discharge your account. I am aware of the imprudence of publishing a book so ill-digested as 'St. Irvyne;' but are there no expectations on the profits of its sale? My studies have, since my writing it, been of a more serious nature. I am at present engaged in completing a series of moral and metaphysical essays—perhaps their copyright would be accepted in lieu of part of my debt."\* The profits on the sales of "St. Irvyne" were not such as to encourage Stockdale to accept the copyright of metaphysical essays by the same author; and so matters rested. The publisher did not renew

\* Shelley does not resume the cordial "Yours sincerely," or "Your sincere," of earlier letters, but remains Stockdale's "Very humble servant."

his claim, and the author made no further inquiry about his profits.

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On returning to Oxford, in January, 1811, Shelley resumed his close companionship with Hogg. They still kept in a great degree aloof from their fellow-students, and were pre-occupied with their own ideas and their various literary projects. The piteous story of a certain Mary—a real person, known in her distress to Hogg—had been related by his friend to Shelley; it had thrown him into a three weeks' "entrancement," and formed the occasion of a series of poems rapidly produced. The same story was treated in prose by Hogg, probably with considerable aid from Shelley, and the novel, to which they gave the title "Leonora," was now in the hands of the Oxford publishers, who had produced the "Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson." Shelley's printers were not slow to discover that "Leonora" was a novel with a tendency—the author "had interwoven his free notions throughout the work." Having earnestly, but without success, dissuaded him from publication, they declined to proceed with their task. The manuscript was thereupon placed in the hands of King, an Abingdon printer, who had nearly seen it through the press, when the abrupt termination of Shelley's Oxford career stopped its further progress.\*

This was but one of several literary enterprises, his own or those of others, in which Shelley was actively interested. In Janetta Phillips—an aspirant versifier now forgotten—he imagined that he had found a second Felicia Browne, and he subscribed liberally for the volume of her poems printed at Oxford in 1811, perhaps made himself in part responsible for the cost of publication. From the moment of his first going up to Oxford in the spring of 1810, he was deeply interested in giving to the world a large historical, political, and scientific

\* See Mr. Henry Slatter's letter on Shelley at Oxford, printed in the notes to Robert Montgomery's "Oxford." I am by no means clear, however, as to whether Hogg or Shelley was the principal writer of "Leonora."

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 Oct. 1810– the means of bringing it out. Mr. Browne, better known at  
 Mar. 1811. Oxford under his assumed name of "Bird," had been an officer  
 in the Royal Navy. Having suffered, according to his own  
 account, "heavy oppression" from his superior officer, he  
 wrote, in a moment of irritation, instigated by an attorney  
 suborned, as Browne believed, to betray him, an intemperate  
 letter to a certain port-admiral, and in consequence was  
 obliged to leave the navy. In 1807 he took refuge in Sweden,  
 and compiled a vast body of notes on its scenery, customs,  
 history, agriculture, mineralogy. Shelley enthusiastically  
 undertook to purchase the copyright of Browne's work; from  
 time to time during his residence at Eton and Oxford he  
 accepted bills for its author which in a few months had  
 mounted up to one hundred and fifty pounds; and his last  
 act at Oxford was to put his name to a bond for eight hundred  
 pounds, borrowed with a view to the purchase of the copy-  
 right and the benefit of Browne.\*

Already Shelley's zeal on behalf of poor candidate authors  
 whom he regarded as persons of merit was bringing heavy  
 burdens upon his own shoulders, which he was ill able to  
 support. In the case of Browne, however, it was unfortunately  
 the publishers who were the losers; but Shelley had not so  
 intended it. To assist unrecognized genius, to enrich the  
 world with a store of scientific fact, to aid a supposed advocate  
 of the people in his distress—these were not the objects for  
 which Oxford freshmen, seventy years ago, were accustomed  
 to strain their resources; but these—not wine, or horses, or  
 the prize-ring, or the cock-pit—were Shelley's temptations to  
 imprudence. At this time his thoughts tended much in the

\* I am indebted for some information on this subject to Mr. Rose, of High Street, Oxford, and to Mr. A. C. Hillier, of Worcester College, who made inquiries on my behalf. Unhappily the publishers also went security for the £800, and upon them fell the chief loss. The publishers never doubted that it was Shelley's intention to pay the full amount; but his prospects suddenly changed, he never afterwards was wealthy, and probably he looked forward to clearing old scores when he should succeed his father in possession of a large property.

direction of social and political questions. In days when the memory of the French Revolution was fresh, and the terror of revolutionary ideas was a prevailing epidemic, Shelley, the heir of a house distinguished by its loyalty to the Whig chiefs, had passed over to the extreme left of the party of advance. If he bore a banner, the word "liberty" must be inscribed on it; and if he valued one form of liberty more than another, it was the liberty of the scholar and thinker—freedom to seek the truth unfettered, freedom to express openly our beliefs on all matters of importance. An Irish journalist, Peter Finnerty, who in 1797 had suffered imprisonment and the pillory for his criticisms of the Government at Dublin Castle, was again in misfortune in 1811. At the request of Sir Home Popham, he had accompanied the ill-judged and unfortunate expedition to Walcheren in the preceding year, with the intention of writing an account of the events of the war, but was suddenly ordered home by Lord Castlereagh, then Secretary of the War Department. In a letter to Lord Castlereagh, published in the *Morning Chronicle*, Finnerty liberated his mind in passionate language, and reminded his old antagonist of the tyrannous and cruel administration of law in Ireland during the days of rebellion. A prosecution for libel resulted in Finnerty's conviction, and he was sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment in Lincoln Gaol. The advanced liberals of England were roused, and made Finnerty's cause their own. A meeting of "the friends of liberty of the press" was held at the Crown and Anchor, with the popular hero, Sir Francis Burdett, in the chair; speeches were delivered in which the law of libel and the character of Lord Castlereagh were freely impugned, and a subscription was opened for the benefit of the victim of tyranny. In his journal, the *Examiner*, Leigh Hunt wrote ardently on Finnerty's behalf, maintaining the duty, at such a time, of public writers to be bold and even adventurous in advocating the cause of individual freedom. The cry "Finnerty

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CHAP. and liberty!" was taken up at Oxford by the *University*  
 III. *and City Herald*, and arrangements were made at the office  
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 Mar. 1811. imprisoned journalist. Of the guineas received, one of the  
 earliest, and doubtless one of those most eagerly proffered,  
 came from "Mr. P. B. Shelley."\* But Shelley desired to  
 render more material aid to the cause. Perhaps he had  
 beside him in manuscript, perhaps he now hastily wrote, a  
 poem dealing with public affairs, which was issued, to assist  
 in maintaining Finnerty in prison, under the title "A Poetical  
 Essay on the Existing State of Things. By a Gentleman of  
 the University of Oxford." The motto from Shelley's favourite  
 poem, "The Curse of Kehama"—

"And Famine at her bidding wasted wide  
 The wretched land, till in the public way,  
 Promiscuous where the dead and dying lay,  
 Dogs fed on human bones in the open light of day"—

may give some colour to the conjecture that the essay was a satire dealing with the condition of Finnerty's unhappy country during the rebellion of 1798, and since the Act of Union. But the year 1811 was one of extreme misery in England as well as Ireland, and Shelley would have found ample material for indignant lamentation in the social and political condition of his own land. Medwin remembered the harrowing effect which "Espriella's Letters," by Southey, with their cruel pictures of the sufferings of the poor, the evils of the manufacturing system, the barbarity of the martial laws, produced on Shelley. It occurs to me, as a conjecture not wholly groundless, that the "Poetical Essay on the Existing State of Things" may have been an earlier form of those sections of "Queen Mab" which treat of the present time, and

\* The first guinea received for Finnerty was from "Mr. Bird," probably the writer of the manuscript volume on Sweden in which Shelley was interested. The second was from "Mr. Hobbes"—perhaps the Mr. Hobbes of whom we shall hear presently in connection with Shelley's sceptical opinions. The third guinea came from Shelley.

the evils now done under the sun. While at Keswick, Shelley probably extended his view so as to embrace not only the Present, but the Past and Future. In a letter to Miss Hitchener, written from Dublin in February, 1812, appear several lines from the closing section of "Queen Mab," which tells of the happy future in store for the inhabitants of earth. If it be true that the "Poetical Essay" was the nucleus of the later poem, we may find an explanation of Shelley's repeated statement—a statement made before the Lord Chancellor in 1817, who was in possession of Miss Westbrook's copy of "Queen Mab," dated 1813—that the poem which had occasioned such grave offence was actually written and published when its author was of the age of nineteen. In a Dublin newspaper of a later date, a copy of which was forwarded by Shelley to Godwin, it is stated that "the profits of a very beautiful poem" had been remitted by Shelley to the patriotic Finnerty, and had amounted, "we have heard," adds the veracious chronicler, "to nearly a hundred pounds." Had the "Poetical Essay," a pamphlet of which the price was but two shillings, ever gained for its author half one hundred pounds, it would not now be among the lost waifs of literature, unknown even through the slenderest review. Under any circumstances its disappearance is singular; for the "Poetical Essay" was not withdrawn from circulation as was the volume by "Victor and Cazire," and advertisements announcing that it was on sale appeared at intervals from March 9 to April 11, in Oxford and London journals. No lover of verse seems to have cherished it; no patriot cared to bind it between esteemed pamphlets by "Verax" and "Justitia." Yet it is perhaps not unreasonable to expect that the fingers of some keen picker in the dust-heaps of the past may one day fumble forth this prize to reward his diligence, when we shall be duly grateful if he will but avoid sending a nuisance of needless dust down the wind.\*

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\* Readers who would see how much it is possible to write about a vanished

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The same number of the *Examiner* (February 24, 1811) which prints as its leading article Leigh Hunt's "Remarks on the Case of Mr. Finnerty," reports a triumph of that organ of free criticism over the Government. An article on the savagery of military floggings, with the inflammatory heading, "One Thousand Lashes!!" reprinted in the *Examiner* from a provincial journal, had attracted the attention of the Attorney-General. A criminal information for seditious libel was filed against Leigh and John Hunt. On the side of the defendants Brougham put forth all his strength. Lord Ellenborough was on the bench, and strenuously exhorted the jury to bring in a verdict for the Crown. After an hour's deliberation the jury returned with a verdict of "Not guilty." It was the Attorney-General's third attack on the *Examiner*, and his third defeat. But victories are costly, and the Hunts had paid about three hundred pounds in consequence of being three times found innocent. Shelley rejoiced at the triumph of liberal opinion; he reflected, at the same time, on the injury which such unjust assaults are able to inflict on individuals. He had read, probably in the Abbé Barruel's "Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire du Jacobinisme," how Spartacus Weishaupt founded the Society of Illuminists, not so many years ago, for the defence and propagation of free thought and revolutionary principles; he remembered how formidable that society had grown. It occurred to him that a league for mutual defence might be formed among the friends of "rational liberty," which might bring to the aid of individuals the strength of an association. With these thoughts at work in his brain, Shelley lost no time in addressing a letter to Leigh Hunt as editor of the *Examiner*.

trifle may consult Mr. D. F. M'Carthy's "Shelley's Early Life." Mr. M'Carthy supposes that the "Poetical Essay" may be the "satirical poem" which Shelley says he is composing in a letter to Hogg of December 20, 1810. It is somewhat curious that both Mr. H. Slatter and Mr. C. Kirkpatrick Sharpe speak of the profits of the "Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson" as having been applied to Finnerty's benefit.

University College, Oxford, March 2, 1811.

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SIR,

Permit me, although a stranger, to offer my sincerest congratulations on the occasion of that triumph so highly to be prized by men of liberality; permit me also to submit to your consideration, as one of the most fearless enlighteners of the public mind at the present time, a scheme of mutual safety and mutual indemnification for men of public spirit and principle, which, if carried into effect, would evidently be productive of incalculable advantages. Of the scheme, the enclosed is an address to the public, the proposal for a meeting, and shall be modified according to your judgment, if you will do me the honour to consider the point.

The ultimate intention of my aim is to induce a meeting of such enlightened, unprejudiced members of the community, whose independent principles expose them to evils which might thus become alleviated, and to form a methodical society, which should be organized so as to resist the coalition of the enemies of liberty, which at present renders any expression of opinion on matters of policy dangerous to individuals. It has been for the want of societies of this nature that corruption has attained the height at which we behold it; nor can any of us bear in mind the very great influence which, some years since, was gained by *Illuminism*, without considering that a society of equal extent might establish *rational liberty* on as firm a basis as that which would have supported the visionary schemes of a completely equalized community.

Although perfectly unacquainted with you privately, I address you as a common friend to *liberty*, thinking that, in cases of this urgency and importance, etiquette ought not to stand in the way of usefulness. My father is in Parliament, and on attaining twenty-one I shall, in all probability, fill his vacant seat. On account of the responsibility to which my residence in this university subjects me, I, of course, dare not publicly avow all that I think; but the time will come when I hope that my every endeavour, insufficient as they may be, will be directed to the advancement of liberty.

Your most obedient servant,

P. B. SHELLEY.\*

\* First published by Mr. G. H. Lewes, in his article on Shelley in the *Westminster Review*, April, 1841, from the original then in his possession. Hunt refers to the letter in his preface to "The Masque of Anarchy" (1882).



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We know not how Leigh Hunt acknowledged this letter, or, indeed, whether it received any acknowledgment.

"On account of the responsibility to which my residence in this university subjects me, I, of course, dare not publicly avow all that I think"—when Shelley wrote these words he little anticipated that within a month he should be driven forth an exile from Oxford. It will be remembered that he had informed Stockdale, probably in December, 1810, or early in January, 1811, of his having completed "a metaphysical essay in support of atheism, which he intended to promulgate throughout the university." With his Oxford booksellers, Munday and Slatter, he was equally frank; he would enter freely into conversation with them, and made no secret of his divergence from traditional beliefs. They, concerned for his welfare, "used more than ordinary endeavours," says Mr. Slatter, "to reclaim the waywardness of his imagination." On one occasion they applied to a literary friend, Mr. Hobbes, a poet and a liberal in politics, to meet him and debate with him concerning questions of faith. Mr. Hobbes consented, and Shelley for the time seemed impressed by his arguments. Mr. Hobbes went further, and drew up an analysis of Shelley's reasonings, accompanying his analysis with a running comment intended to refute the boy-heretic's sophistries. Shelley met the attack with the good-humoured remark that "he would rather meet any or all of the dignitaries of the Church than one philosopher," and refused to notice it further.\* Probably already he had made trial of the swordmanship for religion of such dignitaries of the Church as could be tempted to display their prowess against an unknown challenger. In the letters written to Hogg during the Christmas vacation are allusions to a certain "W." to whom, says Shelley, "I wrote, when in

\* Mr. Hobbes is described as "author of 'The Widower,' a poem." I venture to call him a liberal in politics, because I find the name "Mr. Hobbes" with that of "Mr. Bird" as the earliest subscribers to the Oxford fund for Peter Finnerty. Munday and Slatter were the publishers of the *Oxford Herald*, at the office of which journal the subscription was opened.

London, by way of a gentle alterative. He promised to write to me when he had time, seemed surprised at what I said, yet directed to me as the Reverend: his amazement must be extreme." Probably the Reverend Percy B. Shelley, or it may be the Reverend John Doe or Richard Roe, had applied to Mr. W—— for a solution of doubts respecting the truth of Christianity. The innocent W—— had made haste to fortify his doubting brother in the faith. Whereupon Shelley invited his friend Hogg to enjoy a share of the wit-combat, and the unhappy W——, some great three-decker of orthodoxy, was boarded at once on the right and left by a pair of nimble, piratical sea-dogs. "Your letter," writes Shelley to Hogg, "is excellent, and I think will fully (in his own mind) convince Mr. W——. I enclosed five sheets of paper full this morning, and sent them to the coach with yours. I sat up all night to finish them; they attack his hypothesis in its very basis, which, at some future time, I will explain to you; and I have attempted to prove, from the *existence* of a Deity and of Revelation, the futility of the superstition upon which he founds his whole scheme." The mystification amused Shelley; the exercise in dialectics was a keen delight. A few months later we find him in correspondence—possibly under a feigned name—with an eminent writer on prophecy and evidences of Christianity, named by Shelley among the "Armageddon heroes" of the day—the Rev. George Stanley Faber, then holding a vicarage close to Hogg's home at Stockton-on-Tees.\* "Shelley," says Hogg, "not only read greedily all the controversial writings on subjects interesting to him which he could

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\* See the frequent mention of letters to and from "F.," in Hogg's "Life of Shelley," vol. i. pp. 372, 374, 378, 379, 410. In one instance a short note is given, signed "G. S. F." (p. 363), and once occurs the phrase "à la Faber" (p. 412). Mr. Faber was of University College, Oxford (Shelley's college), and in 1805 became vicar of Stockton-on-Tees. Mr. Faber's grandson, Mr. Reginald S. Faber, has informed me that he possesses no letters from Shelley, and has no knowledge of a correspondence between his grandfather and the poet; but many letters had been destroyed, perhaps Shelley's among them, which may have been written under a feigned name, and so have been unrecognized.

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procure, and disputed vehemently in conversation with his friends, but he had several correspondents with whom he kept up the ball of doubt in letters; of these he received many, so that the arrival of the postman was always an anxious moment with him."

Partly as a convenient means of opening a correspondence with any distinguished contemporary on questions of religion, Shelley decided to print a "leaflet for letters," which should bear a startling title, "The Necessity of Atheism." "The mode of operation," writes Hogg, "was this: He enclosed a copy in a letter and sent it by the post, stating, with modesty and simplicity, that he had met accidentally with this little tract, which appeared, unhappily, to be quite unanswerable. Unless the fish was too sluggish to take the bait, an answer of refutation was forwarded to an appointed address in London, and then in a vigorous reply he would fall upon the unwary disputant." Hogg had called his attention to the mystic virtue residing in the letters Q. E. D. appended to the geometrician's proof of a proposition. "If you ask a friend to dinner," exclaimed Shelley, smiling, "and only put Q. E. D. at the end of the invitation, he cannot refuse to come." If anything could decide a hesitating champion of the faith to couch his lance, it would be this calmly aggressive "*quod erat demonstrandum*" at the end of the argument. The sting of the pamphlet was to be in its tail.

After the Christmas vacation Shelley returned to Oxford, envenomed against what he termed "intolerance" and "bigotry," by the loss of his cousin's love, and of the confidence of his own household. "I will crush Intolerance," he wrote to Hogg. "I will at least attempt it. To fail even in so useful an attempt were glorious." "Why," asked Trelawny of Shelley, in the last year of his life, "do you call yourself an atheist? It annihilates you in this world." "It is a good word of abuse to stop discussion," replied Shelley—"a painted devil to frighten the foolish, a threat to intimidate

the wise and good. I used it to express my abhorrence of superstition. I took up the word as a knight takes up a gauntlet in defiance of injustice.\* Within a fortnight after Shelley's return to college, in January, 1811, appeared in the *Oxford Herald* (February 9) an advertisement of "The Necessity of Atheism," as speedily to be published, and "to be had of the booksellers of London and Oxford."† The pamphlet, for which probably Shelley had found it difficult to obtain a publisher, was issued from a provincial press by the Phillipses, printers of Worthing, in Sussex.‡ The author's name does not appear upon the title-page, but the signature, *Thro' deficiency of proof, An Atheist*, is appended to a brief notice placed before the text, and attributed at the time to Hogg, in which the author earnestly entreats those of his readers who may discover any defect in his reasoning, or may be in possession of proofs which his mind could not obtain, to set forth the same "as briefly, as methodically, as plainly, as he has taken the liberty of doing." Shelley's short and easy method with theists, starting from a false premiss, "the senses are the source of all knowledge to the mind," briefly examines the evidence for the existence of a God derivable from the senses, from reason, and from testimony, and sets each aside as incompetent to establish a proof. It is free from passion, methodical in arrangement, clear and concise in style; but neither original in thought nor specially felicitous in expression. If Shelley's postulate—one common

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\* Trelawny's "Records of Shelley, Byron, and the Author," vol. ii. p. 92.

† On February 13, 1811, Shelley wrote to Edward Graham, acquainting him that he is sending him a book, about which he is to observe the strictest secrecy, and the title-page of which he is to cut out, but which he is to advertise in "eight famous papers," and in the *Globe*. "Silence and despatch." This was, perhaps, "The Necessity of Atheism."

‡ In a letter to Hogg, written about the end of July, 1811 (Hogg's "Life of Shelley," i. p. 386), Shelley mentions "Philipp's debt." Mr. McCarthy conjectures that Shelley may have made himself responsible for the cost of publishing Janet Phillips's "Poems." But is it not probable that "Philipp's debt" may be the sum due to E. and W. Phillips, of Worthing, for publishing "The Necessity of Atheism"?

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 Mar. 1811. a logical mind will find it difficult to avoid arriving at Shelley's conclusion.

“The Necessity of Atheism” was advertised as for sale, and, we are assured, was actually on sale in Oxford, at least for twenty minutes.\* Without informing Messrs. Munday and Slatter, Shelley “strewed the shop-windows and counter” of their house with copies of the pamphlet, and instructed their shopman to sell them as fast as he could at the price of sixpence each. The Rev. John Walker, a Fellow of New College, having dropped in, was struck by the singular title, looked into the pamphlet, and immediately desired to see one or both of the principals. What was this poison they were vending? If they had any sense of propriety or any prudence, they would instantly destroy all the copies on which they could lay hands. The booksellers, surprised and alarmed, made haste to comply with the sensible advice, and at the fire of a back kitchen, while the Rev. John Walker, as chief inquisitor, looked on, an *auto-da-fe* of unshriven heretics took place. A request was at the same time sent by the booksellers to Shelley, to be allowed a few minutes’ conversation with him at their house. He came without delay, and an eager dialogue ensued. On the one side, Mr. Munday, Mr. Slatter, and a certain Councillor Clifford (famous in the O. P. riots), who happened to be present, representing to Shelley the error of his ways, pleading, imploring, threatening; on the other side, the unabashed and beardless boy, arguing in shrill tones, maintaining his right to think, and to declare his thoughts to others—to the last unconvinced and unpersuadable. He had done worse, he told them, than spread his net in the sight of callow Oxford birds—worse than shock the susceptibilities of a Fellow of New College; he had sent a copy of his

\* So writes Mr. Forman, “on good authority,” in his note prefixed to “The Necessity of Atheism,” in his edition of Shelley’s Prose Works.

pamphlet to every bishop on the bench, to the Vice-Chancellor, to each of the heads of houses, and accompanying each copy was a pretty letter in his own handwriting, with the signature of "Jeremiah Stukeley," the latest avatar of Percy Bysshe Shelley, an incarnation assumed for this special occasion.\*

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The date of these incidents is not precisely fixed. Shelley's authorship of "a prose pamphlet in praise of atheism" was noised abroad at least ten days before the college authorities were prepared to take public action.† There were doubtless communications from dignitaries who had received copies of the pamphlet accompanied by the letter from Jeremiah Stukeley, the handwriting of which had been compared with that of Shelley, and found to agree with it, and big-wigs were laid together in consultation. Lady-Day came (March 25), a fine spring morning. Hogg called earlier than usual that morning at Shelley's rooms—they had agreed to lengthen their hours of reading. Shelley was absent. What followed shall be told in the words of Hogg. "Before I had collected our books he rushed in. He was terribly agitated. I anxiously inquired what had happened. 'I am expelled,' he said, as soon as he had recovered himself a little—'I am expelled! I was sent for suddenly a few minutes ago. I went to our common room, where I found our Master and two or three of the Fellows. The Master pro-

\* I have followed the account of these incidents, given by Mr. Henry Slatter in his letter of December 18, 1833, to be found in the notes to Robert Montgomery's "Oxford." The Rev. John Walker was editor of the *Oxoniana* (4 vols.). He could speak as a friend and with authority to Munday and Slatter, having been one of the original proprietors of the *Oxford Herald* (of which they were publishers), and having for several years assisted in its editorial department. Councillor Clifford had become famous in the O. P. riots of 1809. He appeared in the pit of Covent Garden Theatre one night with the letters O. P. (Old Prices) in the front of his hat. The box-keeper caused him to be arrested. Clifford indicted the box-keeper for assault and false imprisonment, and obtained a verdict in spite of the judge's direction to the jury. "A reconciliation dinner, with Mr. Clifford in the chair, and Mr. Kemble on his right hand, took place, and the toast of the evening was the prosperity of both parties" (*Martineau's "History of England, 1800-1815,"* bk. ii. chap. iii.).

† C. Kirkpatrick Sharpe, in a letter of March 15 (Lady C. Bury's "Diary," vol. i. p. 52), refers to the pamphlet as written by Shelley.

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duced a copy of the little syllabus, and asked me if I were the author of it. He spoke in a rude, abrupt, and insolent tone. I begged to be informed for what purpose he put the question. No answer was given; but the Master loudly and angrily repeated, 'Are you the author of this book?' 'If I can judge from your manner,' I said, 'you are resolved to punish me if I should acknowledge that it is my work. If you can prove that it is, produce your evidence; it is neither just nor lawful to interrogate me in such a case and for such a purpose. Such proceedings would become a court of inquisitors, but not free men in a free country.' 'Do you choose to deny that this is your composition?' the Master reiterated in the same rude and angry voice. Shelley complained much of his violent and ungentlemanlike deportment, saying, 'I have experienced tyranny and injustice before, and I well know what vulgar violence is, but I never met with such unworthy treatment. I told him calmly, but firmly, that I was determined not to answer any questions respecting the publication. He immediately repeated his demand. I persisted in my refusal; and he said furiously, "Then you are expelled, and I desire you will quit the college early to-morrow morning at the latest." One of the Fellows took up two papers and handed one of them to me; here it is.' He produced a regular sentence of expulsion, drawn up in due form, under the seal of the college." "I have been with Shelley in many trying situations of his after-life," adds Hogg, "but I never saw him so deeply shocked and so cruelly agitated as on this occasion. . . . He sat on the sofa, repeating with convulsive vehemence the words, 'Expelled! expelled!' his head shaking with emotion, and his whole frame quivering."

Hogg instantly addressed a note to the Master and Fellows, who still sat deliberating. He regretted the treatment which Shelley had received at their hands, and expressed a hope that they would reconsider their sentence, since by a like procedure he or any other person might be subjected to the same

imputation of guilt and the same penalty. A porter, after a brief delay, summoned him to the common room. The same questions were addressed to him which had been put to Shelley, and were met by the same refusal to answer them. He was ordered to retire, was hastily recalled, and, persisting in his refusal, received a formal sentence of expulsion, duly signed and sealed. While the conclave still sat and discussed the matter, hoping perhaps that, before the last act was performed and the deed irreversible, the rash youths might return and tender their submission, they perceived Shelley and Hogg walking up and down the quadrangle, and, so it seemed, flaunting their indifference to punishment in the face of the authorities. What more was needed? It was now towards the afternoon, and presently issued an official armed with the fatal edict—a large paper signed by the Master and Dean, bearing the college seal, and declaring that Thomas Jefferson Hogg and Percy Bysshe Shelley were publicly expelled from the college for contumacy in refusing to answer certain questions put to them, and for declining to disavow the obnoxious pamphlet. This was affixed to the hall door, and the deed was done.

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Indignation against the tyranny of power is a passion too precious for the uses of the world to be lightly squandered or directed towards an improper object. If the University of Oxford and its colleges had existed somewhere in the air, or were attached to Cloud-cuckoo-town, there could be small warrant for the action of the authorities of Shelley's college. But the roots of the institution were in the soil, intertwined with the faith of the English people and the creeds of the English Church. A pupil surrenders a certain portion of his freedom as a condition of obtaining certain benefits. The publication of such a pamphlet as Shelley's was an act of revolt, and attention having been called to the act, it was natural, and perhaps expedient, that measures should have been taken to vindicate the authority of the heads of the



CHAP. institution. But good feeling and a slight exercise of imagination might have enabled his elders to discover in Shelley's  
III. offence the rash act of a boy whose brain was at work, who  
Oct. 1810- loved to impress his own ideas on others, and who enjoyed the  
Mar. 1811. excitement of an intellectual adventure. It would have been possible to have approached Shelley in a kindly spirit through his tutor; to have admitted his right to think for himself, and to have pointed out precisely where the error of his insubordination lay. A sentence of rustication might have sufficed for an offence against discipline, which was more an offence of the intellect than of the heart and will. Had the discipline of University College in 1811 been stringent and directed by high aims, there would be less ground for objection to the severity of the punishment; but to sodden the brain in wine, to waste the strength of youth in riotous living, were venial errors; to fling out a boy's defiance against the first article of the Creed was a crime which merited nothing less than capital punishment. It has been said that Shelley was regarded from the first with a jealous eye, because by his family and connections he was attached to the side of the Whig candidate for the chancellorship of the University, Lord Grenville, who had recently defeated the Tory champion, Lord Eldon, a member of University College. But we need not seek for other motives than the obvious ones to account for the action of the authorities. The generous indiscretion of Hogg in coming forward and associating himself with Shelley was probably not to the advantage of the latter, for Shelley's associate was viewed with even less favour than Shelley himself. "I believe no one regretted their departure," wrote Mr. Ridley, a junior Fellow at the time; "for there were but few, if any, who were not afraid of Shelley's strange and fantastic pranks, and the still stranger opinions he was known to entertain; but all acknowledged him to have been very good-humoured and of a kind disposition. T. J. Hogg had intellectual powers to a great extent, but, unfortunately, misdirected. He

was not popular." Now they were thrown, as it were, into each other's arms, and Shelley imagined for a time that he had found in Hogg his realized ideal of all that is great in intellect and chivalric in conduct.

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At eight o'clock on the morning of March 26, 1811, the two friends mounted to the top of the coach which ran to London. Almost at the last moment information came that if it were inconvenient to them to quit the place so suddenly they might remain for a time, and that "if Shelley would ask permission of the Master to stay for a short period, it would probably be granted." \* Shelley was too indignant to petition for any favour; and so, while the coach-wheels whirled and the March breeze blew past them, they saw the towers and spires of Oxford sink in the distance, and felt that a new epoch of life had begun.

NOTE.—The following account of the expulsion of Shelley from Oxford, written by Mr. Ridley, then a junior Fellow, afterwards Master of University College, deserves to be printed. I have obtained from it some particulars introduced into my text. For a transcript of Mr. Ridley's manuscript I am indebted to the Rev. James Franck Bright, the present Master of University College; who has also kindly given me a copy of the entry on the college books recording the fact of the expulsion.

Mr. Ridley writes, "It was announced one morning at a breakfast party, towards the end of Lent Term (March 25, 1810 [an error for 1811]), that Percy Bysshe Shelley, who had recently become a member of University College, was to be called before a meeting of the common room for being the supposed author of a pamphlet called 'The Necessity of Atheism.' This anonymous work, consisting of not many pages, had been studiously sent to most of the dignitaries of the university and to others more or less connected with Oxford. The meeting took place the same day, and it was understood that the pamphlet, together with some notes sent with it, in which the supposed author's handwriting appeared identified with that of P. B. S., was placed before him. He was asked if he could or would deny the obnoxious production as his. No direct reply was given either in the affirmative or negative. Shelley having quitted the room, T. J. Hogg immediately appeared, voluntarily on his part, to state that if Shelley had anything to do with it, he (Hogg) was equally implicated, and desired his share of the penalty, whatever was inflicted. It has always been supposed that Hogg wrote the preface. Towards the afternoon a large paper bearing the college seal, and signed by the Master and Dean, was affixed to the hall door, declaring that the two offenders were publicly expelled from the college *for contumacy in refusing to answer certain questions put to them*. The aforesaid two

\* Hogg, "Life of Shelley," vol. i. p. 287.

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had made themselves as conspicuous as possible by great singularity of dress, and by walking up and down the centre of the quadrangle as if proud of their anticipated fate. I believe no one regretted their departure, etc. [see above, p. 122].

"J. J. R.

"January 16 [no year], 20, Waterloo Crescent, DOVER."

The entry on the college books is as follows :—

"At a meeting of the Master and Fellows held this day it was determined that Thomas Jefferson Hogg and Percy Bysshe Shelley, commoners, be publicly expelled for contumaciously refusing to answer questions proposed to them, and for also repeatedly declining to disavow a publication entitled 'The Necessity of Atheism.'"

1811,  
March 25.  
Hogg,  
Shelley.

Peacock makes a curious statement which may be recorded here. According to the account given by Shelley to Peacock "his expulsion was a matter of great form and solemnity; there was a sort of public assembly before which he pleaded his own cause, in a long oration, in the course of which he called on the illustrious spirits who had shed glory on those walls to look down on their degenerate successors. . . . He showed me an Oxford newspaper containing a full report of the proceedings, with his own oration at great length. I suppose the pages of that diurnal were not deathless, and that it would now be vain to search for it; but that he had it, and showed it to me, is absolutely certain. His oration may have been, as some of Cicero's published orations were, a speech in the potential mood; one which might, could, should, or would, have been spoken; but how in that case it got into the Oxford newspaper passes conjecture."

My friend Mr. Hillier has searched the *Oxford Herald* for 1811 in vain for this oration, and I have myself looked through another Oxford newspaper with no better success.

In "A Newspaper Editor's Reminiscences," published in *Fraser's Magazine*, June, 1841, will be found a somewhat different account of the expulsion from that of Hogg, which the writer says he had from Shelley soon after the event. His memory probably deceived him when he represented Shelley as having told him that he said to the Master, "I did write the work; I see nothing in it of which I have not reason to be proud."

It is exceedingly difficult to make use of the information about Shelley given in "A Newspaper Editor's Reminiscences" (*Fraser's Magazine*, June, 1841), for the writer's memory evidently failed him as to dates. Mr. Forman believes that his name was Merle. A letter of Shelley to Edward Graham, dated "Eton Coll., May 29" [1810], mentions that he has received a letter from Merle, with whom, says Shelley, he will have nothing more to do, "not even for drawing-utensils." The "Newspaper Editor," son of a French *émigré*, was at that date an assistant in Ackerman's, in the Strand. This Merle may be William Henry Merle, author of "Costanza, a Poem," and "Odds and Ends in Prose and Verse." Some time after Shelley's expulsion from University College the "Newspaper Editor" and Shelley had a meeting at Horsham, when Shelley proposed to him to become a philosopher, and, supported by funds to be raised by Shelley, to aid him in seeing and studying the world. Shelley engaged that on the day on which he came into possession of his property Merle should be independent. The interview closed with an indignant protest from Merle against Shelley's attacks on Christianity. Six months later Merle received a

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letter from Shelley apologizing for his warmth of manner. He wrote that he now desired to find two children—if possible girls of four or five years old (they being more precocious than boys)—whom he might bring up in some sequestered spot, with a view to ascertaining what impressions the world produces upon the mind when veiled from human prejudice. Shelley would bind himself to make provision for the parents, and watch as a father over the children. Merle remonstrated, and pointed out the danger and folly of the project, which Shelley thereupon abandoned. Once again Shelley wrote, saying that he had been recently much troubled with dyspeptic symptoms, and tormented with visions. This seems to have been the last letter received by Merle.

The following account of Shelley at Oxford appears in a letter—dated March 15, 1811—from C. Kirkpatrick Sharpe, printed in Lady C. Bury's "Diary," vol. i. pp. 52-56. "Talking of books, we have lately had a literary sun shine forth upon us here, before whom our former luminaries must hide their diminished heads—a Mr. Shelley, of University College, who lives upon arsenic, aqua-fortis, half an hour's sleep in the night, and is desperately in love with the memory of Margaret Nicholson. He hath published what he terms the Posthumous Poems, printed for the benefit of Mr. Peter Finnerty, which I am grieved to say, though stuffed full of treason, is extremely dull; but the author is a great genius, and, if he be not clapped up in Bedlam or hanged, will certainly prove one of the sweetest swans on the tuneful margin of the Cherwell. . . . Our Apollo next came out with a prose pamphlet in praise of atheism, which I have not as yet seen; and there appeared a monstrous romance in one volume called "St. Irvyne, or the Rosicrucian." Here is another pearl of great price! All the heroes are confirmed robbers and causeless murderers, while the heroines glide *en chemise* through the streets of Geneva, tap at the palazzo doors of their sweethearts, and being denied admittance leave no cards, but run home to their warm beds and kill themselves. If your lordship would like to see this treasure I will send it. Shelley's last exhibition is a 'Poem on the State of Public Affairs' [i.e. "A Poetical Essay on the Existing State of Things"].

In a letter to Godwin it is stated by Shelley that Copleston had a copy of the "Necessity of Atheism." "He showed it to the Master and Fellows of University College," Shelley writes, "and I was sent for."

## CHAPTER IV.

## FIRST MARRIAGE.

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Aug. 1811. It was in many ways unfortunate that Shelley should have been thrown abroad upon the world at the age of eighteen years and a half. He was an ardent student, and the seclusion of his college rooms was precious to him. He would inevitably have found his way to what is admirable in the literature and thought of the past—already he was interested in Plato. He might have attained to juster views of the world, and of the history and laws of human society. The storing of his mind with wisdom and knowledge would have imposed checks upon his will of which he would have been scarcely conscious, and have given direction to his experimenting in real life which might have saved others and himself from much future suffering. Had all gone well, he would have left the university, perhaps in 1814, bound by ties of unripened affection to his own kindred, and conscious of a high destiny, so that self-preservation, in a worthy sense of that word, might have become with him an abiding though invisible instinct. His voyage must needs have been fleet and far, and the craft, with fore and flying sails set, must often have run upon her side and drunk the water; all the more reason, therefore, for laying some ballast below before she raced into the gale. But the same temperament which exposed him to unusual risks made Shelley our keenest singer of joy and sorrow; and we must take in all things loss with gain in

this life of ours, content if the gain exceeds by a little, CHAP. IV.  
abundantly grateful if it exceeds by much.

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On reaching London and dismounting from the coach, Hogg and Shelley put up at some coffee-house near Piccadilly; dined, and by-and-by sallied forth to take tea with Shelley's cousins, the Groves, in Lincoln's Inn Fields—"taciturn people," says Hogg, who held their peace while Bysshe told his story. There was also his cousin and former school-fellow, Medwin, who must be informed of what had happened, the time chosen for this communication being the dark hour before the dawn of a March morning. "I remember," says Medwin, "as if it occurred yesterday, his knocking at my door in Garden Court, in the Temple, at four o'clock in the morning, the second day after his expulsion. I think I hear his cracked voice, with his well-known pipe—'Medwin, let me in; I am expelled!' Here followed a sort of loud, half-hysteric laugh, and a repetition of the words, 'I am expelled,' with the addition of, 'for atheism.'" After breakfast there was a hunt for lodgings, and "never was a young beauty," declares Hogg, "so capricious, so hard to please," as the poet. At length they found themselves at Poland Street, Oxford Road.\* For revolvers on behalf of freedom the name "Poland Street" had a lucky sound; besides, here, indeed, were lodgings, at No. 15, with a quiet back sitting-room, its walls papered with trellised vine-leaves and clustering grapes—an abode of enchantment. "We must stay here," whispered Shelley—"stay for ever." This "for ever" became afterwards a jest between the friends; for all Shelley's movements, sudden and erratic as the starts of a meteor—one of those that

"Caper

On hill-tops when the moon is in a fit"—

were to conduct him to some resting-place where he should abide "for ever."

\* Now Oxford Street.

CHAP. IV. At the Poland Street lodgings the friends resumed, as far as might be, that life of study and companionship so rudely interrupted at University College. With its clustering grapes and the cheery blaze of a fire, the interior was not unsatisfactory. It was spring, and the weather was fine; they took long walks together, or rambled in Kensington Gardens, the secluded parts of which delighted Shelley, particularly "one dark nook where were many old yew trees." They dined now with the Groves, now with Medwin in Garden Court, and oftener at whatever coffee-house they happened to be near, returning for tea to their vines and fireside. All would have been tranquility were it not for the groundswell of disappointed love still aheave in Shelley's breast, and the inconveniences caused by a pair of afflicted and indignant fathers who threatened or implored. Mr. Timothy Shelley had instantly written to forbid Hogg's intended visit to Field Place, and despatched a troubled and not over-coherent mis-sive, speedily followed by a second, to Mr. John Hogg, of Norton, Stockton-on-Tees, suggesting that he should come to London, where they might use their joint endeavours to separate the inseparable friends, each of the pair to be conveyed, if possible, to his own home—"your young man" to the far north, and "my young man" to his southern county. "These youngsters must be parted," wrote Mr. Shelley, "and the fathers must exert themselves. . . . They want to get into professions together. If possible they must be parted, for such monstrous opinions that occupy their thoughts are by no means in their favour." At the same time he addressed a letter from his Westminster hotel to his son in Poland Street, expressing sympathy with him in the misfortune resulting from his "criminal opinions and improper acts," and adding, what was due to his own character, his concern for his other children, and especially his feelings as a Christian, that if Bysshe looked for aid or protection from his father, he must instantly repair to Field Place, abstain for some considerable

time from all communication with Hogg, and place himself CHAP. IV.  
“under the care and society of such gentleman as I shall March-  
appoint, and attend to his instructions and directions he shall Aug. 1811.  
give.” Should these proposals be declined, Mr. Shelley felt bound to “withdraw himself” from his son, and leave that misguided youngster “to the punishment and misery that belongs to the wicked pursuit of an opinion so diabolical and wicked” as that which he had “dared to declare.” On the second Sunday (April 7) of the friends’ sojourn in London, Mr. Shelley saw them at his hotel; after some not unkindly bluster, with sudden and oddly veering flaws of temper, he proceeded, over a bottle of port, to demonstrate, by a short and easy method derived from “Paley’s book,” the existence of a Deity. “Paley’s ‘Natural Theology,’” he wrote to the elder Mr. Hogg, “I shall recommend my young man to read; it is extremely applicable. I shall read it with him.”

We cannot but sympathize with the vexation and bewilderment of a respectable country gentleman of kindly heart, irritable temper, and not too perspicacious brain, to whom the Fairy Mab had assigned such a son as Bysshe. With the best intentions he would inevitably put himself in the wrong, and be certain to vindicate his dignity as a man, and his authority as a father, by insisting on precisely that condition with which it was impossible for his son to comply. At first what interrupted the negotiations was probably Mr. Shelley’s demand that the two friends should cease to hold any communication with each other—a demand not altogether unreasonable; but so late as 1813 the Oxford catastrophe was made the ground of refusing aid to his son when in distress, and Mr. Shelley exacted as a proof of filial obedience that Bysshe should write to the authorities of University College announcing his return to the Christian fold. While recognizing Mr. Shelley’s well-meant efforts, it is but right to observe that to his son they must have presented at times an aspect of injustice and grotesque unreason. Shelley’s affection



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as a boy for his father was real and deep. His eldest sister told how on one occasion, when Mr. Timothy Shelley was suffering from an illness, which was supposed to be dangerous, Bysshe "would creep noiselessly to his room door to watch and listen with tender anxiety." But it was inevitable that time should discover the differences between characters and intellects so unlike. Shelley viewed persons too much through the medium of abstractions; his father represented in his eyes principles and habits of action which he deemed obstructive and mischievous. His own revolutionary temper of thought was too ready to apply reason as a solvent to human relations, the sanctity of which can be made real for us only through traditions of the heart. Was it "reasonable" to venerate one who, judged by the light of reason, could not justify his claim to veneration? And yet the letters which Shelley addressed to his father, as far as they can be known from the few remaining examples, were invariably respectful in tone, while unfaltering in the firmness with which his own position was maintained.

In reply to his father's letter of April 5, requiring him to put himself under a tutor of Mr. Shelley's choice and submit to his instructions, while at the same time he should break off all relations with Hogg, Shelley wrote from Poland Street as follows:—

MY DEAR FATHER,

As you do me the honour of requesting to hear the determination of my mind as the basis of your future actions, I feel it my duty, although it gives me pain to wound "the sense of duty to your own character, to that of your family, and your feelings as a Christian," decidedly to refuse my assent to both the proposals in your letter, and to affirm that similar refusals will always be the fate of similar requests. With many thanks for your great kindness,

I remain your affectionate, dutiful son,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

In writing to his most intimate associates, Hogg and Graham,

he now and again gave licence to his pen, when referring to his father, in a sarcastic word or phrase. Such offences against right feeling and good taste may be judged too seriously; but it is certain that Shelley's imagination did not sufficiently exert itself on his father's behalf with a disinterested desire for justice. Mr. Timothy, reading over his bottle of port a little abstract of Paley's argument for the existence of a God, and blustering between tears and laughter, was doubtless a sufficiently ludicrous object; yet a slight play of imagination might have revealed, behind this grotesque figure, a father who was kind after his fashion, and really sore at heart. But Shelley's imagination in his nineteenth year had learnt little of that wisdom which age and experience bring; and, as he himself expressed it, he was, to a certain extent, "a bigot in philosophy." \*

There is no doubt that Shelley at this time persuaded himself that he was deeply indebted to Hogg, and was gaining all possible intellectual and moral benefits from this chosen comrade who had braved the Oxford conclave in order to stand in disgrace by his side. He was not going to resign such a friendship or such a friend. The opinionated youngsters—undutiful and disobedient to a degree!—so Mr. Shelley relieved his feelings—thought it "their duty to *demand* an unrestrained correspondence." Shelley, indeed, cared less to justify himself in the eyes of the elders than to justify Hogg. Long after the Italian waters had closed over his head, a letter was discovered which he had secretly addressed to the elder Mr. Hogg, vindicating his friend from the charge of being the "original corrupter" of his principles. Shelley, says Hogg, writing with unusual emotion at thought of this service so delicately rendered, so late revealed, had many "underhand ways;" but his underhand ways differed from those of other people—"the latter were concealed because they were mean, selfish,

\* A poetical epistle to Graham, referring to his father in odious terms, is in existence.

CHAP. IV. sordid . . . his secrets, on the contrary, were hidden through modesty, delicacy, generosity, refinement of soul." "Myself and my friend," wrote Shelley in this letter, "have offered concessions; painful indeed they are to myself, but such as on consideration we find due to our high sense of filial duty." Only they refused to renounce each other, and the continuance of their friendship would seem to have received the sanction at least of the elder Hogg.

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Their outlook on the future had now lost some of its first vagueness and confusion. Hogg's profession was already chosen. He designed himself for the bar, and was soon to enter a conveyancer's office in the city of York. Shelley loved the law and lawyers no better than he did a standing army, against which he would already declaim as he strolled or strode through St. James's Park; and yet he was not without a portion of the debater's and orator's gift. Once about this time he went, with his cousin Charles Grove, to the British Forum, a speech-making club of fervid Radicals. "Bysshe made so good a speech," says his cousin,\* "complimenting and differing from the previous orators, that when he left the room there was a rush to find out who he was, and to induce him to attend there again. He gave them a false name and address, not caring a farthing about the meeting or the subjects there discussed." Once also, if we may trust Medwin, he desired to exercise his powers of eloquence before another and a larger audience. In Medwin's company he had visited Surrey Chapel, and seen and heard the great preacher, Rowland Hill, with resonant voice swaying the multitude, his ideas, as Sheridan described them, coming red-hot from the heart. After chapel, when dining in the City, Shelley, writing under an assumed name, addressed a letter to Mr. Hill, proposing to occupy the pulpit and unburden his soul to the congregation. No answer came; but there was still something to gratify his fancy in the elvish

\* John Grove: Hogg's "Life," vol. i. pp. 332, 333.

wildness and sublime incongruity of the request. To be lawyer or divine, however, was not precisely Shelley's calling. Charles Grove had lately left the navy, and was now in town attending Abernethy's anatomical lectures. The profession of medicine, by its scientific bearings and its philanthropic aims, had a twofold attraction for Shelley. "The thought of anatomy," writes Charles Grove, ". . . became quite delightful to Bysshe." His mornings were usually occupied, with Hogg by his side, in writing. The writing ended, he would regularly set forth with his cousin for Abernethy's lecture at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, Hogg occasionally being one of the party. At this time Shelley seriously looked forward to becoming a physician.\*

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But such were not the views of his father or his father's friends. The member for New Shoreham had expected his son to fill a seat in Parliament in the Whig interest, and to enjoy in due time at Horsham the honours of a county magnate. Shelley himself when at Oxford thought it likely, as appears from his letter to Leigh Hunt, that at the age of twenty-one he should succeed his father in the House of Commons; and the Whig chief, whom Mr. Timothy Shelley followed as a leader, the Duke of Norfolk, had encouraged Bysshe to turn his thoughts immediately to politics; it was the career for a young man of ability and position, virtually a monopoly, and free from the degrading competition of the learned professions. But Shelley, although eagerly alive to certain social and political questions, had begun to doubt whether practical politics and "virtue" could be brought into living harmony; and the influence of his Grace of Norfolk, a *bon vivant* surrounded by men who kept the table in a roar, and a famous trafficker in boroughs, was not omnipotent with him. "By the duke's invitation," wrote Charles Grove, "Bysshe met his father at dinner at Norfolk House, to talk over a plan for

\* "When last I saw you," he wrote to Miss Hitchener, in a letter of October, 1811, "I was about to enter into the profession of physic."

CHAP. IV. bringing him in as member for Horsham. . . . I recollect the  
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Aug. 1811. indignation Bysshe expressed after that dinner at what he considered an effort made to shackle his mind, and introduce him into life as a mere follower of the duke. His father was puzzled what to do when that plan failed."

The politics of a Whig aristocrat, indeed, could never have found a loyal follower in Shelley. In 1811 a young man of enthusiastic temperament might well be pardoned if he imagined that nothing better could be desired than to make a clean sweep of existing institutions and begin the world anew, with the magic words, "Nature," "Reason," "Love," "Liberty," "Equality," as spells or talismans in which to trust. The times were the most miserable in England since the opening of the century. The king, now old and mad, was represented by the fat Adonis of fifty, whose character and conduct did not render him an inspiring presence to those who were not prepared to set their faith absolutely in princes. Ireland was languishing in bitter poverty, and clamoured for Catholic emancipation. Foreign commerce had not been so depressed within the memory of living man. Manufacturers could not pay such wages as would make life tolerable to their workmen. Famished operatives grew wrathful against the machines that had turned them adrift, and were making ready for the mill-burnings and frame-breakings of the autumn. There was a complete collapse of mercantile credit. The bitter winter and harsh spring had told severely on agriculturists; thousands of sheep had perished in the snows; many peasants had not wherewithal to buy fuel. Gangs of deserters from the army haunted the hills and seaside caves, issuing forth at night to maraud and murder. If a journalist complained of the sufferings of the people in any save the meekest of voices, the Attorney-General prosecuted him for libel, or filed an information against him and kept the terror suspended over his head. In days less disastrous Southey and Coleridge, then of riper years

than Shelley in 1811, had dreamed of pantisocracy on the banks of the Susquehanna, and a community of goods in "the undivided dale of industry." Shelley was to be an English physician. He did not contemplate a flight from this old world, with its wrongs and sorrows; but he could not view these calmly, and his intellect and imagination had been dazzled by the abstractions of French revolutionary thought, delivered with the air of a high philosopher by William Godwin. How was he to be just and sane at nineteen in such a time and with a philosophy which professed to reconstruct the world anew? "In theology," he wrote about this time to a friend—"inquiries into our intellect, its eternity or perishability—I advance with caution and circumspection. I pursue it in the privacy of retired thought or the interchange of friendship. But in politics—here I am enthusiastic. I have reasoned, and my reason has brought me on this subject to the end of my inquiries. I am no aristocrat, nor "*crat*" at all, but vehemently long for the time when men may dare to live in accordance with Nature and Reason—in consequence, with Virtue, to which I firmly believe that Religion and its establishments, Polity and its establishments, are the formidable though destructible barriers."\* It was a wild conclusion; but the times were wild, and Shelley was but an ardent boy. Had he gazed upon the spectacle of society with indifference, accepted the *status quo*, and for his own part acquiesced in a life of wealth and ease, he would have had no reproach to bear, except the reproach of his own heart, and a shadow in the eyes of those invisible witnesses who compass us about.

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If all the rest of England were miserable, it was not so with Carlton House on the night of June 19, 1811. Preparations for the grand ball had been made on a scale of unprecedented magnificence, taxing to the utmost the powers of the penman who described the event next day in the *Morning Herald*. The Bourbon family were received by the Prince Regent sitting

\* Shelley to Miss Hitchener, June 25, 1811.

CHAP. IV. under a crimson canopy of state, and passed from the Privy Council Chamber to the sky-blue satin room, decorated in their honour with *fleurs-de-lis*. In the conservatory the grand table extended to the length of two hundred feet, and above the table in the midst ran a canal of pure water flowing from a silver fountain, the artificial banks covered with green moss and aquatic flowers, while gold and silver fishes swam in mid-stream. At the head of the table above the fountain sat, on a throne of crimson velvet, the deity of this fair creation—his Royal Highness the Prince Regent, in a field-marshal's uniform, his hair in a long queue, a large diamond loop and button in his hat, a jewelled sabre by his side. "His looks and graceful deportment throughout the night," said the writer of the *Morning Herald*, "were in perfect unison with his princely costume." If on any matter difference of opinion could exist, it was only as to whether the Countess of Clonmel or Mrs. Thomas Hope deserved the palm for "superiority in attire."

Shelley read with laughter the ecstatic penny-a-liner's description, and threw himself with mock enthusiasm into the jest. He resolved, as a loyal subject and singer, to celebrate the event in verse, and addressed a letter inviting the co-operation of young Edward Graham, his music-loving friend, the pupil of Woelff: "If, Graham, within that democratical bosom of thine yet lingers a spark of loyalty, if a true and firm King's man ever found favour in thy sight, if thou art not totally hardened to streamlets whose mossy banks invite the repose of the wanderer,—if, I repeat, yet thou lovest thy rulers and kissest the honeyed rod—then, Graham, do I conjure thee by the great George our King, by our noble Prince Regent, and our inimitable Commander-in-chief—then do I conjure thee by Mrs. Clarke, the Duke of Kent, and Lord Castlereagh, together with Lord Grenville, that thou wilt assist me (as heretofore thou didst promise) in my loyal endeavour to magnify, if magnification be possible,

our Noble Royal Family. . . . Thou hast an harp of fire and I a pen of honey. Let, then, the song roll—wide let it roll! Take thou thy tuning-fork, for the ode is coming.” The burlesque letter closes with a stanza from Shelley’s version of the Marseillaise,\* beginning with “Tremble, kings despised of man.”† In a more serious tone he wrote to another friend: “What think you of the bubbling brooks and mossy banks of Carlton House, the *allées vertes*, etc.? It is said that the entertainment will cost £120,000; nor will it be the last bauble which the nation must buy to amuse this overgrown bantling of Regency.”‡ The ode, which he announced to Graham as “coming,” did actually come—a poem of fifty lines, in which the Prince, sitting on the bank of his tiny river, was duly apostrophized. It was immediately printed, and Shelley amused himself with flinging copies into the carriages of persons who called at Carlton House after the ball and banquet.§

Hogg’s stay in London had been brief. Towards the middle of April he was off for a short holiday in Shropshire, previous to settling down to his legal training in York. It was arranged that Shelley should follow him to York before June, and that there they should recommence the pleasant student-life. A year later they were to return to London, and

\* The whole of which exists elsewhere in manuscript.

† The original of this letter is in the possession of Mr. F. Locker.

‡ Shelley to Miss Hitchener, June 20, 1811.

§ Letter from C. H. Grove to Miss Hellen Shelley: Hogg’s “Life of Shelley,” vol. ii. pp. 556, 557. Three or four lines of Shelley’s poem survive, and will be found in Mr. Forman’s or Mr. Rossetti’s edition of his Poetical Works. Mr. Forman supposes that, besides the poem in which the Prince is apostrophized, Shelley may at this time have completed the “satirical poem” which he told Hogg he was composing in December, 1810. This, he conjectures, may have been the manuscript poem offered, according to Thornton Hunt, to Mr. Rowland Hunter, the publisher. Hunter sent Shelley to seek advice of Leigh Hunt. Mr. Forman conjectures that Shelley’s poem may be “Lines addressed to His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, on his being appointed Regent. By Philopatria, Jun.” (Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, 1811). The Regent, however, had been installed early in February. I can find no sure trace of Shelley in the “Lines” by Philopatria.



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 Aug. 1811. says Hogg, "with mutual regret, leaving him alone in the trellised chamber . . . a bright-eyed, restless fox amidst sour grapes." In Hogg's absence the solitude deepened around Shelley; thoughts of his lost love returned, and with these came at times a passion of despair, for which the effort to employ himself in writing poetry was not perhaps the fittest remedy. "Shall I say," he wrote to Hogg (April 26, 1811), "that the time may come when happiness shall dawn upon a night of wretchedness? Why should I be a false prophet if I said this? I do not know, except on the general principle that the evils in this world powerfully overbalance its pleasures. How, then, could I be justified in saying this? You will tell me to cease to think, to cease to feel; you will tell me to be anything but what I am; and I fear I must obey the command before I can talk of hope." And of his attempts at poetry: "You sent me some beautiful verses; but I am not accustomed to be flattered, and you will make me either vain, past bearing, or confused past recovery, if you talk so of my weak essays of procedure on 'the steep ascent' of perfectibility. Why, how dare I attempt to climb a mountain, when I have no guide to point out the path, but a few faint sparks which at intervals illumine the gloom? For these even am I not more indebted to *you* than to *myself*?"\* At the same time he was harassed by troublesome negotiations with his father. On leaving Oxford, Shelley had been obliged to borrow twenty pounds of his printers to take him on his way and meet his immediate needs. For a few weeks there was a community of goods between himself and Hogg, but on his friend's departure the pressure of want made itself painfully felt. Mr. Timothy Shelley would furnish no supplies

\* Shelley to Hogg: "Life of Shelley," vol. i. pp. 399, 400. This letter is undated, and is placed by Hogg among letters written from Field Place in June; but I agree with Mr. Rossetti in believing that it followed hard upon the letters of April 26 and April 29, printed on pp. 358-365 of Hogg's first volume.

to a son "undutiful and disrespectful to a degree." When Shelley, calling at Mr. John Grove's house, met his father in the passage and inquired after his health, the answer was a look "as black as a thunder-cloud," with a majestic "Your most humble servant," in passing.\* "Father," he writes on April 29, "is as fierce as a lion again. . . . He wants me to go to Oxford to apologize to the Master, etc. ! No, of course."† It was Shelley's hope, though hardly a serious expectation, that he might obtain from his father an allowance of two hundred pounds a year, on condition of resigning all claim to the entail, and consenting that the rest of the property should be divided among his sisters. His son's request to be disinherited only incensed Mr. Shelley, and, indeed, the proposal was one which could not be carried into effect until Bysshe had attained the age of twenty-one. Whether his father would grant the allowance unconditionally, remained in doubt: now, under the influence of John Grove's soft persuasions, he seemed to yield; and presently he made haste to disavow anything of the nature of a promise. "I am now at Grove's," wrote Shelley, on April 28. "I don't know where I am, where I will be. Future, present, past, is all a mist; it seems as if I had begun existence anew under auspices so unfavourable. Yet no ! that is stupid." ‡

Shelley's mother and sisters felt tenderly towards the forlorn rebel, and were inclined to render him what service they could, but dared not openly avow their feelings or designs. A letter from Shelley to his father, which she supposed might make the situation worse was intercepted by Mrs. Shelley. She urged her son to visit Field Place, and enclosed a sum of money to meet his expenses; but he felt that to return home at this time would be equivalent to accepting the intolerable conditions imposed by his father, and therefore he declined

\* Shelley to Hogg, April 24, 1811 : Hogg's "Life of Shelley," vol. i. p. 346.

† Hogg's "Life of Shelley," vol. i. p. 348.

‡ Shelley to Hogg : Hogg's "Life of Shelley," vol. i. p. 304.

CHAP. IV. his mother's gift, and sent it back without delay. Aware of  
 March— Bysshe's slender resources or downright want, his sisters  
 Aug. 1811. hoarded their pocket-money for his sake, and from time to time sent him secretly, with loving hearts, such small treasure as they could muster. Elizabeth, the eldest, was now at home; the younger girls were pupils in Mrs. Fenning's school, at Church House, Clapham—a mansion situated near the old town, on the north side of the common, directly facing Trinity Church.\* Thither Mr. Timothy Shelley would drive in state, and wait in the drawing-room until his daughters were full dressed, as for dancing, to receive him, when they would enter respectfully in the order of their ages, and give him greeting in due succession. Thither also, through the antique gateway and up the lawn, came Bysshe—a brighter apparition—with the luminous dark-blue eyes and extravagant locks, his pockets bulging with cakes to be mysteriously made over to little Hellen. Even under Mrs. Fenning's kindly rule he had discovered victims of oppression. "One day," writes his sister Hellen, "his ire was greatly excited at a black mark hung round one of our throats as a penalty for some small misdemeanour. He expressed great disapprobation, more of the system than that one of his sisters should be so punished. Another time he found me, I think, in an iron collar, which certainly was a dreadful instrument of torture in my opinion. It was not worn as a punishment, but because I *poked*; but Bysshe declared it would make me grow crooked, and ought to be discontinued immediately;" † and Bysshe, of course, was

\* McCarthy, "Shelley's Early Life," preface, xv. Perhaps at this date (April, 1811) the school had passed from Mrs. Fenning to Miss Hawkes.

† Hogg, "Life of Shelley," vol. i. p. 17. Miss Hellen Shelley (born September 26, 1799) says, "My knowledge of Bysshe ended at ten years of age, and probably the last time I saw him was at Clapham." Hogg tells of a visit to Mrs. Fenning's in the spring of 1811. "When we stopped at the gate, a little girl, eight or ten years old, with long light locks streaming over her shoulders, was scampering about. 'Oh! there is little Hellen,' the young poet screamed out with rapturous delight" ("Life," vol. i. p. 299). Hogg is certainly right in stating that she was still at the school.

not content with words, but carried his point. The visits of CHAP. IV  
 this reformer of academic discipline were not encouraged by March-  
 the elderly lady who kept the school; yet still, by circuitous Aug. 1811.  
 routes, mysterious parcels of eatables, intended for the Shelley  
 sisters, found their way within the entrance of Church House.  
 It was little wonder that the girls should be in sympathy  
 with a rebel so engaging and so kind.

Shelley's sisters desired, as far as was in their power, to  
 succour him in his distress; but how should they convey to  
 him their little store of coin? Two years older than the  
 eldest of the schoolgirl sisters, and freer in her movements,  
 as her parents lived in town, was Mrs. Fenning's pupil, Harriet  
 Westbrook. Already she and Shelley were known to each  
 other; for early in January, when he went up to London  
 from Field Place, in company with Charles Grove, he was the  
 bearer of a letter of introduction and a present from his sister  
 Mary to her friend Harriet. On January 11 he directed his  
 publisher to send her a copy of "St. Irvyne;" but, as if her  
 address, 23, Chapel Street, Grosvenor Square, were not familiar  
 to him, he gave, in his letter to Stockdale, a wrong number to  
 the house. We meet the names of Shelley and his sisters, and  
 Harriet Westbrook, in the list of subscribers to the little  
 volume of "Poems" by Janetta Phillips—a list probably  
 drawn up almost immediately after Shelley's departure from  
 Oxford.\* Why should not Harriet Westbrook, his sisters'  
 friend, his own acquaintance, be the bringer of good things  
 from Church House, Clapham, to Poland Street? On August 1,  
 three days before Shelley's nineteenth birthday, Harriet  
 would be sixteen years of age; but she had a sister—  
 Eliza—nearly twice as old,† under whose conduct she moved,  
 and who assumed in large measure the place of a mother  
 towards her, although Mrs. Westbrook, seemingly an incapable

\* See M'Carthy, "Shelley's Early Life," pp. 110, 111.

† Miss Westbrook was at this date thirty years old, according to the statement  
 of Shelley's counsel in the Chancery case of 1817-18.

CHAP. IV. person, was still living. Mr. John Westbrook,\* her father, known, from his swarthy looks and salient features, as "Jew Westbrook," had kept a "coffee-house"—in reality a tavern—in Mount Street. Having made sufficient means to enable him to retire from business, he was now enjoying the fruits of his toil, with one unmarried daughter at home, old enough to be skilled in the lore of life; and one, still a schoolgirl, receiving a genteel education at Mrs. Fenning's seminary for young ladies.

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The elder Miss Westbrook has obtained an evil memorial in the caricature drawn by Hogg's malicious pen. A figure meagre, prim, and constrained; a face of dingy white, sadly scarred and seamed by disease, from which looked forth unintelligently a pair of dark lack-lustre eyes; the whole overtopped by a mass of coarse hair, black and glossy—Miss Westbrook's peculiar pride;—such are the features on which the limner dwells with rude insistence. "I remember her well," writes her nephew, a more trustworthy witness than Hogg, recalling her image in days long after—"I remember her well as a handsome, grand old lady, with dark front of hair, piercing dark eyes, and with a kind manner to children, but of whom we were somewhat afraid. Her carriage, old-fashioned large chariot, spot dog, large horses, man-servant, lady-companion, formed a whole which made a deep impression on my childish memory."† Whether Eliza were a comely or uncomely maiden of thirty, it is certain that Harriet was all youthful freshness, fairness, bloom; short of stature; slightly and delicately formed; light of foot and graceful in her move-

\* The name was also spelt Westbrooke.

† Rev. W. Esdaile. Her kindness to Harriet Shelley's daughter, Ianthe, is gratefully remembered by Mrs. Esdaile's children. Eliza Westbrook inherited her father's property, and married a gentleman whose name was originally Farthing (Somerset family of yeomen). He was a clerk in a London bank; an old lady named Beauchamp fell in love with him, and left him all her property, on condition that he should change his name to Beauchamp. Thus Eliza Westbrook became Mrs. Beauchamp. Mr Farthing Beauchamp's name appears with Mr. and Miss Westbrook's in the Chancery case of 1817-18.

ments; with features regular and well proportioned; her complexion bright and clear—"the tint of the blush rose," as Peacock puts it, "shining through the lily;" her abundant hair light-brown and beautiful, says Miss Hellen Shelley, as "a poet's dream." She dressed, we are told by Peacock, with taste and simplicity. "The tone of her voice was pleasant; her speech the essence of frankness and cordiality; . . . her laugh spontaneous, hearty, and joyous." The teachers at Mrs. Fenning's school planned a *fête champêtre*, and it was decided that if Venus were to appear, she must appear in the person of Harriet Westbrook. When Harriet came in the April and May days, bearing gifts to Shelley, it was as if the spirit of a spring morning entered his room, making radiant a place of solitude and shadowy thoughts.

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The copy of "St. Irvyne" forwarded to Harriet in January by Shelley's direction probably led to some correspondence between its author and his new acquaintance.\* Her school-fellows, we may suppose, were not slow to discover this, and the strange opinions of her young correspondent becoming known, it is easy to imagine how Harriet had to bear the playful sallies of the witty, and the averted looks, the warnings or reproaches, of the wise. Did she not receive letters from an atheist? "Atheist"—Harriet did not know precisely what was the meaning of the word, but felt certain that it must mean something dreadful. When they explained to her all its tremendous significance, she was appalled, and wondered that the earth did not gape to swallow him, or the lightning descend from heaven to strike him dead. In after days, when she had been Shelley's wife for some few months, and had caught, as by a feeble reflex, his manner of speech, Harriet gave in a letter to a female friend—Miss

\* Mr. Charles Grove, having spoken of the visit paid by himself and Shelley to Mr. Westbrook's house in January, 1811, adds, "I scarcely know how it came about, but from that time Bysshe corresponded with Miss Westbrook." It came about, we may surmise, by means of the gift of "St. Irvyne."

CHAP. IV. Hitchener—a sketch of her early life, her girlish feelings, and her first acquaintance with Shelley, in which there is much naïve self-betrayal which gives it a touching interest.

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“Why does my dear friend continually mislead herself, and thus apply to my judgment, which is so inferior to her own? ’Tis true you have mixed more in the world than myself. My knowledge has been very confined on account of my youth, and the situation in which I was placed. My intercourse with mankind has, therefore, been much less than you may imagine. When I lived with my father I was not likely to gain much knowledge, as our circle of acquaintance was very limited, he not thinking it proper that we should mix much with society. In short, we very seldom visited those places of fashionable resort and amusement which, from our age, might have been expected. ’Twas but seldom I visited my home, school having witnessed the greater part of my life. But do not think from this that I was ignorant of what was passing in the great world: books and a newspaper were sufficient to inform me of these. Though then a silent spectator, yet did I know that all was not as it ought to be. I looked with a fearful eye upon the vices of the great; and thought to myself ’twas better even to be a beggar, or to be obliged to gain my bread with my needle, than to be the inhabitant of those great houses, when misery and famine howl around.

“I will tell you my faults, knowing what I have to expect from your friendship. Remember my youth; and, if any excuse can be made, let that suffice. In London, you know, there are military, as well as everywhere else. When quite a child I admired these red-coats. This grew up with me; and I thought the military the best as well as most fascinating men in the world—though at the same time I used to declare never to marry one. This was not so much on account of their vices as from the idea of their being killed. I thought, if I married any one, it should be a clergyman.

Strange idea this, was it not? But being brought up in the Christian religion, 'twas this first gave rise to it. You may conceive with what horror I first heard that Percy was an atheist; at least so it was given out at Clapham. At first I did not comprehend the meaning of the word; therefore when it was explained I was truly petrified. I wondered how he could live a moment professing such principles, and solemnly declared that he should never change mine. I little thought of the rectitude of these principles, and when I wrote to him I used to try to shake them—making sure he was in the wrong, and that myself was right. Yet I would listen to none of *his* arguments, so afraid I was that he should shake my belief. At the same time I believed in eternal punishment, and was dreadfully afraid of his supreme Majesty, the Devil. I thought I should see him if I listened to *his* arguments. I often dreamed of him, and felt such terror when I heard his name mentioned. This was the effects of a bad education and living with Methodists. Now, however, this is entirely done away with, and my soul is no longer shackled with such idle fears.” \*

Alone in London, an outcast from his Oxford College, an exile from his father's house, Shelley was grateful to any one, and peculiarly grateful to any one of that sex which, Goethe tells us, loves order rather than freedom, who might have courage to associate with him and take his hand in kindness. The elder Miss Westbrook, on her own part and as guide and guardian of her younger sister, showed the friendliest solicitude on behalf of the interesting misbeliever; wrote to him; called on him with Harriet; invited him to dinner when her father was from home; conducted him to church on Sunday and detained him for the sacrament; studied under his direction the graceless articles of Voltaire's "Dictionnaire

\* Letter dated "17, Grafton Street, Dublin, March 14, 1812." It is of special interest as showing the nature of Shelley's correspondence with Harriet—a polemical correspondence rather than, as Hogg fancied, that of a wooer and his beloved.



CHAP. IV. Philosophique." \* During the Easter holidays, when Harriet was at home, Miss Westbrook made friendly incursions on Shelley's solitude; and when the vacation came to an end, and Mrs. Fenning's pupils were required to resume business, Miss Westbrook was so "condescending" as to invite the friendless youth to accompany her to Clapham in order to make inquiries after Harriet, who had not been looking well, and to take her for an airing on the common. "My little friend Harriet Westbrook," wrote Shelley to Hogg (April 24, 1811), "is gone to her prison-house. She is quite well in health; at least so she says, though she looks very much otherwise. I saw her yesterday. I went with her sister to Miss H——'s,† and walked about Clapham Common with them for two hours. The youngest is a most amiable girl; the eldest is really conceited, but very condescending." To which sister the words that follow have reference is not clear, but they seem to apply more naturally to Harriet; and it is not without interest to observe that Shelley felt a certain remorse in perplexing the current of her life by doubts and new beliefs which, with her, might not compensate the pain they needs must bring; yet, grant that there be another world and a future life, then, he argued, truth and intellectual growth must in the end result in higher happiness. "You say," he goes on, "I talk philosophically of her kindness in calling on me. She is very charitable and good. I shall always think of it with gratitude, because I certainly did not deserve it, and she exposed herself to much possible odium. It is perhaps scarcely doing her a kindness—it is perhaps inducing positive unhappiness—to point out to her a road which leads to perfection, the attainment of which perhaps does not repay the difficulties of the progress. What do you think of this? If trains of thought, development of mental energies, influence

\* See letters of Shelley to Hogg, in Hogg's "Life of Shelley," vol. i. pp. 344, 345, 348, 366, 375.

† "Miss H.," probably Miss Hawkes, who had succeeded Mrs. Fenning as mistress of the school.

in any degree a future state ; if this is even *possible*—if it stands on *at all* securer ground than mere hypothesis—then is it not a service ? Where am I gotten ? perhaps into another ridiculous argument.” \*

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A day or two later and Harriet was really ill, and once again at home. The elder sister, indefatigable and ever thoughtful, sent late in the evening for Shelley to minister comfort to the invalid ; was herself more than commonly amiable in manner ; began by discoursing on love ; then led him to her sister, and finding that her own company was too much for the sufferer, withdrew. Mr. Westbrook was occupied with friends below, but saw Shelley, and was strangely civil. “[April 28, 1811.] My poor little friend has been ill ; her sister sent for me the other night. I found her on a couch, pale ; her father is civil to me, very strangely ; the sister is too civil by half. She began talking about *l'Amour*. I philosophized, and the youngest said she had such a headache that she could not bear conversation. Her sister then went away, and I stayed till half-past twelve. Her father had a large party below ; he invited me ; I refused.” Shelley’s visit certainly did not act injuriously on Harriet’s nerves. “They [the sisters],” he continues, “are both very clever, and the youngest (my friend) is amiable. Yesterday she was better ; to-day her father compelled her to return to Clapham, whither I have conducted her, and I am now returned.” † Again a day or two and Shelley was sent for to accompany Miss Westbrook to Clapham ; on the way she was more than ever clever and agreeable ; but the pleasure of the visit was marred by learning how cruel the persecution of Harriet by her school-fellows had grown—persecution endured for the sake of Shelley and of truth, and which she met with a noble disdain. All Shelley’s envenomed hatred against “the wretch Intolerance” returned ; here once more “the fiend” was poisoning the innocent joys of life. Hogg, who had acted to a certain

\* Hogg, “Life of Shelley,” vol. i. pp. 345, 346.

† Ibid., pp. 348, 349.

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extent as a safety-valve for his bitter enthusiasm, was now absent; Eliza and Harriet Westbrook and his own sisters remained, through whom he might attack this cruel idol of Superstition, and the attack should be made in the name, not of Passion, but of Reason. "[April 28.] Why is it that the moment we two are separated I can scarcely set bounds to my hatred of intolerance? is it feeling? is it passion? I would willingly persuade myself that it is neither. Willingly would I persuade myself that all that is amiable, all that is good, falls by its prevalence, and that *I* ought unceasingly to attempt its destruction." \* "I am now called to Miss Westbrook. I was too hasty in telling my first unfavourable impression. She is a very clever girl, though rather affected. No! I do not know that she is. I have been with her to Clapham. I will tell you an anecdote. Harriet Westbrook has returned thither as I mentioned. They will not speak to her; her schoolfellows will not even reply to her questions. She is called an *abandoned* wretch, and universally hated, which she remunerates with the calmest contempt. My third sister, Hellen, is the only exception. She, in spite of the *infamy*, will speak to Miss Westbrook, because she cannot see how she has done wrong. There are some hopes of this dear little girl; she would be a divine little scion of infidelity if I could get hold of her." †

It was hard to bear cold looks and unfriendly words from former companions who had held her dear; for Harriet's gentle disposition had caused her to be generally beloved. But there was something yet more painful to endure. Some

\* These words occur in the letter written on the day of his conducting Harriet back to school. The extract which follows is from an undated letter, printed by Hogg out of its proper place ("Life of Shelley," vol. i. pp. 339-401), and which I agree with Mr. Rossetti in placing immediately after the letter of April 29, printed by Hogg on pp. 363-365.

† Hogg, "Life of Shelley," vol. i. pp. 400, 401. It is not perfectly clear whether Shelley speaks in the last sentence of Harriet Westbrook or his sister Hellen; but I think he means the latter.

time previously—perhaps at the beginning of the year—Mrs. Fenning, now grown elderly, had transferred the care of the school to the younger hands of Miss Hawkes. One morning as she entered the schoolroom Miss Hawkes perceived Harriet Westbrook suddenly crumpling a letter in her hands as if to conceal it from view. The keen-eyed head-mistress instantly pounced upon the prize; the letter was signed by the Miss Shelleys' brother, and may possibly have been one of those designed to assist in adding Harriet "to the list of the good, the disinterested, the free." \* Miss Hawkes took the matter seriously; sent, it is said, for Mr. Westbrook and Mr. Timothy Shelley, announced the discovery, and even went so far (but this may be the exaggeration of rumour) as to dismiss Harriet from the school. †

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But it was not Eliza, or Harriet Westbrook, or little Hellen, who occupied the first place in Shelley's thoughts; that place was reserved for Elizabeth, his eldest sister, already designated by him as bride-elect of Hogg. She was now at Field Place, and to visit his home, save under conditions not to be accepted, was forbidden to her brother. At times he thought of making a pacific invasion, and entering his father's dominions "preserving a Quaker-like carelessness of opposition." "Oh, then," exclaimed Mr. Shelley, on getting a hint of his intention, "I shall take his sister away before he comes." "But I," declared Shelley to Hogg, "shall follow her, as her retirement cannot be a secret." If only she would come to town! But of that there appeared to be no chance. Meantime it was grievous to reflect that while he was kept at a distance, father, mother, friends, were near at hand undermining his influence,

\* See Shelley's account of his correspondence with Harriet in a letter to Miss Hitchener, quoted p. 174.

† Mrs. Field (a former pupil of Mrs. Fenning) to Miss Rickman, September 7, 1860. The statement that Harriet was expelled from school is also made by Southey in a letter to Shelley, in which he recites some of the information which he had received from Shelley in 1811-12. See "Correspondence of Southey with Caroline Bowles," Appendix, p. 363.

CHAP. IV. darkening her intellect, fettering her free spirit, and rendering her unworthy of the devotion of Hogg. Her letters showed, indeed, that already she was tainted with intolerance. She talked of "duty to her father—duty of all kinds,"—phrases which really signified servility to the opinion of the world. Suddenly the letters ceased. "She does not any longer permit a *philosopher* to correspond with her," said Shelley, not aware at the time that she had been stricken with a scarlet fever.

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The hearty good will and friendly offices of one of his kinsfolk opened a way for Shelley's return to Field Place. Captain Pilfold, his maternal uncle, had fought with Nelson in the battle of the Nile, and commanded a frigate at Trafalgar. He was now settled with his wife and children at Cuckfield, a market town of Sussex some ten miles distant from Shelley's birthplace. The good-humoured captain had a liking for his nephew, recognized his amiable qualities, was not greatly shocked by his theological heresies, or alarmed by his rash adventurous spirit, and sincerely desired to reconcile the father and the son. Shelley probably made his advances on Field Place from the vantage-ground of Cuckfield, and by the middle of May, 1811, aided by the intervention of the Duke of Norfolk, he had come to terms with his father. Two hundred pounds a year were henceforth to be his, unencumbered by conditions; he might choose his own place of abode, his own friends. Two hundred pounds a year; it seemed to Shelley an ample allowance—"more than I can want," he wrote to Hogg; "besides, what is money to me? What does it matter if I cannot even purchase sufficient *genteel clothes*? I still have a shabby great-coat, and those whose good opinion constitutes my happiness would not regard me the better or the worse for this or any other consequence of poverty. £50 per annum would be quite enough." \* So excellent an uncle surely deserved all gratitude ;

\* Shelley to Hogg, postmark May 2, 1811 : Hogg, "Life of Shelley," vol. i. p. 365. This letter was written before Shelley's father had yielded. I agree

and what better could Bysshe do for him than endeavour to enroll this worthy sea captain among the company of philosophers, and add him to the list of the disinterested and the free? "[Sunday, May 19.] I am now with my uncle. He is a very hearty fellow, and has behaved very nobly to me, in return for which I have illuminated him. A physician named Dr. J—— dined with us last night, who is a red-hot saint; the captain attacked him warm from 'The Necessity,'\* and the doctor went away very much shocked."† It gratified Shelley to find that if his pamphlet did not make converts, it yet had some such power as his Eton electrical machine, and could administer a sharp and sudden buffet to the nerves of any unwary person with whom a connection had been duly established.

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Once more at home, Shelley looked around, and thought it strange that he should have been exiled in the name of religion from such a home. "If a man is a good man, philosopher or Christian," said his mother, "he will do very well in whatever future state awaits him;" and the liberality of this expression of opinion pleased her son. His father, who, to gain Captain Pilfold's confidence in reference to Bysshe, had in private professed himself "a sceptic," was in reality, Shelley thought, neither Christian nor freethinker. "He is nothing, no-*ist*, professes no-*ism* but superbism and irrationalism." "It is most true," he wrote to Hogg, "that the mass of mankind are Christians only in name; their religion has no reality. . . . Certain members of my family are no more Christians than Epicurus himself was; but they regard as a sacred criterion the opinion of the world; the discanonisation of this saint of

with Mr. Rossetti in believing that Shelley's first letter from Cuckfield is that dated erroneously by Hogg, August 9, 1811 (vol. i. pp. 412-415). Then follows probably the letter of May 15 (vol. i. pp. 371-374); then that dated May 17 (vol. i. pp. 376-379); then that of Sunday, May 19, dated erroneously May 17 (vol. i. p. 374).

\* Shelley's Oxford pamphlet.

† Hogg, "Life of Shelley," vol. i. p. 374. The letter is dated by Hogg Sunday, May 17; but Sunday was the 19th.

CHAP. IV. theirs is impossible until something more worthy of devotion is pointed out; but where eyes are shut, nothing can be seen. They would ask, are we wrong to regard the opinion of the world; what would compensate us for the loss of it? Good heavens, what a question! Is it not to be answered by a word? So I have but little of their confidence." \*

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To a certain extent Shelley's intercourse with his sister Elizabeth was checked or disturbed by their father; but it was evident that her feeling towards him was changed. Her illness had passed away; her health was now perfect, and she had a girlish joy in the amusements and social gatherings of the summer days. To Bysshe—an earnest young evangelist—her spirits seemed but too frivolously gay; casual pleasures, petty gratifications of her pride, came from day to day to fill her heart. It used not to be the character of my sister, said Shelley—"serious, contemplative, affectionate, enthusiastically alive to the wildest schemes; despising the world. Now apathetic to all things except the trivial amusements and despicable intercourse of restrained conversation; bowing before that hellish idol, the *world*; appealing to its unjust decisions, in cases which demand a trial at the higher tribunal of conscience. Yet I do not despair; what she *once was* she has a power to be again; but will that power ever be exerted?" † Shelley feared that she had grown unworthy of Hogg; feared that it was an idea of his own mind which he had loved and had named "Elizabeth." When he spoke seriously, she affected to pity the wildness of his brain, or broke away with a scornful exclamation—"You and your mad friend!" When he attempted a liveliness like hers, to see if congeniality even in folly would effect anything, she became grave and fell into a silence. Matrimony—that most horrible of the means by which the world binds the noble to itself—was "the subject of her constant and *pointed* panegyric." Oh, it was monstrous, monstrous! Did she expect that Bysshe, "like a fashionable

\* Hogg, "Life of Shelley," vol. i. pp. 376, 377.

† Ibid., pp. 379, 380.

brother, should act as a jackal for husbands"? Hardly that! CHAP. IV.  
 but when he pleaded in favour of the union of man and maid March-  
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 in pure and perfect love unshackled by law or custom, she answered with a sneer, "This, then, is the honourable advice of a brother." "It is," replied Bysshe, "the disinterested representation of a friend." \* Hogg, musing at a distance on the abstract idea of perfection, had pronounced it blasphemy to doubt Elizabeth's divine excellence. Shelley wished to believe that Hogg was right. Why should not the question be put to the test, and finally settled by Hogg's coming to Field Place, secretly and by night? From an honourable imprisonment in Shelley's study he could look out upon the lawn, and behold Elizabeth as Palamon in Chaucer's tale beheld Emelia, or as King James of Scotland viewed his lady Joanna from the Windsor Tower. "[June 23, 1811.] Come, then, my dear friend; happy, *most* happy, shall I be if you will share my little study; happy that you come on an errand so likely to soothe me, and restore my peace. There are two rooms in this house which I have taken exclusively to myself; my sister *will* not enter them, and no one else *shall*: these you shall inhabit with me. You must content yourself to sleep upon a mattress; and you will be like a State prisoner. You must only walk with me at midnight for fear of discovery. My window commands a view of the lawn, where you will frequently see an object that will repay your journey—the object of my fond affections. . . . The mail-coach will convey you from York to London, whence the Horsham coach will bring you to Horsham (news!); there I will meet you at midnight, whence you shall be conveyed to your apartment. Come, then, I entreat you; I will return with you to York. I almost *insist* on your coming." †

\* Hogg, "Life of Shelley," vol. i. p. 407.

† Ibid., vol. i. p. 409. The wild proposal to Hogg was made in a letter dated "Sunday, June 23, 1811." Perhaps the following passage from an undated letter to Hogg (vol. i. p. 396) throws light on the matter: "I wrote to you on



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Hogg did not travel from York to Horsham to enjoy imprisonment with an occasional view of Miss Shelley on the lawn; and his friend was not slow to perceive the unreasonable nature of his proposal. It had, indeed, been partly suggested to him by his longing for some congenial companionship. Elizabeth was alienated from him; his father either absent in London, or if at home a disturbing element. "I am a perfect hermit," wrote Shelley; "not a being to speak with! I sometimes exchange a word with my mother on the subject of the weather, upon which she is irresistibly eloquent; otherwise all is deep silence! I wander about this place, walking all over the grounds, with no particular object in view."\* His nights were sleepless, haunted by thoughts of his own disprized love—the time for Miss Grove's marriage was now approaching—and of the failure of his plans respecting Elizabeth and Hogg. A troubled gloom hung over his spirits; sad retrospection only gave place to darker anticipation; his inward eye was attracted by the profound fascination of the grave. "Wherefore should we linger? Unhappiness, disappointment, enthusiasm, and subsequent apathy, follow our steps. Would it not be a general good to all human beings that I should haste away, so you stay—stay to make thousands happy? *One* is unworthy of you; and all my wishes are closed, since I have seen that union impossible and unjust which once was my fondest vision."† And a little later, "I have been thinking of Death and Heaven for four days. Where is the latter? Shall we set off? Is there a future life? Whom should we injure by departing? Should we not benefit some? I was thinking last night, when from the summer-house I saw the moon just behind one of the chimneys,

Sunday. Reason have you to say that I was unreasonable. I was mad! You know that very little sets my horrid spirits in motion. I drank a glass of wine or two at my mother's instigation; then began raving. She, to quiet me, gave me pens, ink, and paper, and I wrote to you."

\* Hogg, "Life of Shelley," vol. i. pp. 396, 397. The letter is undated. I agree with Mr. Rossetti in placing it about June 27, 1811.

† Shelley to Hogg, June 16, 1811: "Life of Shelley," vol. i. p. 403.

if she alone were to witness our departure? But I do not talk thus or even think thus when we are together.\* Now and again he would utter his feelings in verse—some complaint against lovers' perfidy, or musings in presence of the evening star looking forth "with that mild pitying gaze." CHAP. IV.  
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"Oh, I would look  
In thy dear beam till every bond of sense  
Became enamoured."

Or he would write a page of a kind of composite fiction, the work of himself and his friend Hogg, in which they intended to embody in the form of a series of letters much of their personal experience; or he relieved his heart in arguments or passionate meditations addressed to Hogg and destroyed as soon as written; or the letter would be one to Miss Westbrook or her sister; for before he had come to the country Shelley had spent much of his time in the company of the elder lady, finding her "amiable," though "not perhaps in a high degree," and had "arranged a correspondence" with each of the sisters. He had felt, while in Miss Westbrook's presence, that she was not quite a being of light and love, but he was content to submit to what he recognized as the law of his nature, and idealize her character so far at least as to render it acceptable by his imagination. "I most probably am now prejudiced," he wrote before leaving London, "for you cannot breathe, you cannot exist, if *no* traits of loveliness appear in co-existent beings." And he goes on to illustrate his idealizing tendency by an example not altogether flattering in its conjunction with Eliza Westbrook's name: "I think, were I compelled to associate with Shakespeare's Caliban, with any wretch—with the exception of Lord Courtney, my father, Bishop Warburton, or the vile female who destroyed Mary—that I should find something to admire."† Letters from Miss

\* Shelley to Hogg: "Life of Shelley," vol. i. p. 398.

† To Hogg, May 8, 1811: Hogg, "Life of Shelley," vol. i. p. 370. Mary was an unhappy girl known to Hogg, who had embodied part of her story in

CHAP. IV. Westbrook followed him to Cuckfield and Field Place, and still he found that she improved upon acquaintance; "or is it," he questions doubtfully, "only when contrasted with surrounding indifference and degradation?" In Harriet there was "something more noble, yet not so cultivated as the elder—a larger diamond, yet not so highly polished. Her indifference to, her contempt of surrounding prejudice, are certainly fine. But perhaps the other wants opportunity." \* At least it beguiled the time to write letters and to receive letters in return, and to occupy the position of philosophic friend to gentle correspondents is an honour and a pleasure at nineteen.

But though Miss Westbrook, to please a friend, read Voltaire, she was to a certain extent an *esprit borné*; Harriet was but an interesting schoolgirl. Far different communion of spirit would Shelley enjoy, were he to meet a woman of ardent and aspiring feelings, high intellectual powers, and resolute will, who had made her way almost unaided toward the uplands and wide air of liberty and truth. What matter if in the eyes of worldlings her origin were humble; what matter if she toiled with head or hand to win an honourable subsistence? Such accidents as these would only tend to raise her in the scale of being, and enhance the dignity of her character. Such a woman Shelley now had found, or—for the alternative expresses a difference—supposed that he had found. While staying at Cuckfield with his uncle Pilfold, he had been introduced to Miss Hitchener, mistress of a school in Hurstpierpoint, a small neighbouring town. A daughter of Captain Pilfold's was among her pupils, and she had certainly gained the esteem of her pupil's parents. It was stated in a letter written by the Earl of Chichester in the following year that

his unpublished novel "Leonora." Shelley hated Warburton because he "dogmatically asserts" that one who "has neglected to cultivate faith has not performed one-third of the moral duties." Shelley to Hogg, April 26, 1811: "Life," vol. i. p. 360.

\* Shelley to Hogg, Sunday, May 19 (misdated 17): "Life," vol. i. p. 375.

Miss Hitchener's father had been originally a smuggler, that his true name was Yorke, and that he had changed his name previous to entering into business as keeper of a public-house. Yorke had run his kegs of spirits ashore duty-free; Mr. Hitchener it was who legally vended liquor to thirsty dwellers near the Downs.\* Miss Hitchener owed little to father or mother; at nine years old she had been sent to school, and in the schoolmistress, Miss Adams, who, "having too much virtue for her age," was "ever an object of persecution," had found "the mother of her soul."† Miss Adams, now old, was still toiling for her bread; and her grateful pupil entered on her profession with the hope of being able at some time to offer this aged friend a place of shelter and repose.

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Elizabeth Hitchener was now in her twenty-ninth year, but looked younger; she was exceedingly spare, and somewhat tall in figure; with well-formed Roman features; her complexion dark as that of a foreigner of the south; her face lit by eloquent black eyes; her black hair when uncoiled falling heavily and far. She was of quick, excitable spirits, and eager in uttering her thoughts; prone to melancholy, yet full of animation when her interest was aroused. Her kinsfolk and acquaintance termed her romantic, visionary, eccentric, conceited; and she, in turn, lamented that there was not one from whom she could "seek improvement," not one who "understood" her. Perhaps her opinions alienated them, for she was known to be a liberal *doctrinaire* in politics and religion. Yet she was not aggressive; would have named herself a Christian, if required to declare her faith; and would fain "tread lightly and cautiously," as she declares, "on what others consider sacred." Once, and probably only once, Shelley had met her, and their talk was doubtless about poetry, education of the young, virtue, truth, the existence

\* The Earl of Chichester's letter is printed in M'Carthy's "Shelley's Early Life," pp. 312, 313.

† Phrases quoted from Miss Hitchener's letters.

CHAP. IV. of a God. Before leaving Cuckfield for Field Place in the beginning of June, Shelley placed a copy of "The Curse of Kehama," his favourite poem, and a copy of Ensor's "National Education," in Captain Pilfold's hands to be lent to Miss Hitchener, and wrote to London ordering for her a copy of Locke—it was important that she should study Locke's argument against innate ideas. On reaching home he despatched to Hurstpierpoint, under his father's frank, a letter—the first of many—proposing a "polemical correspondence," for as yet she had gone but half-way towards complete illumination, and there had halted. "I fear our arguments are too long and too candidly carried on," he wrote, "to make any figure on paper. Feelings do not look so well as reasonings on black and white. If, however, secure of your own orthodoxy, you would attempt my proselytism, believe me I should be most happy to subject myself to the danger."\*

Life would be impoverished indeed if ventures of faith were forbidden. Common sense might raise a warning finger, or let a faint ironic smile play about the lips, when a female philosopher of nine-and-twenty set pen to paper to open a "polemical correspondence" with a philosopher of the other sex, ten years her junior; but common sense is too wise or too foolish to catch at any of the fine chances of existence. A fish who ventures to a breathing-hole in the ice may happen to be speared, yet it is worth while sometimes to come up and try to breathe. Miss Hitchener in her isolation, with a pestering throng of thoughts and feelings which she dared not express to those who had already classed her and explained her by the epithets "romantic" and "visionary," found a happiness which she could not forego in the prospect of liberating her spirit in numerous sheets of letter-paper to one who, like herself, was an enthusiast, like herself a votary of Reason and of Truth. Accordingly in the summer days letters went to and fro in rapid succession—letters which come to

\* To Miss Hitchener: Field Place, June 5, 1811.

a close because all things earthly must have an end, and CHAP. IV.  
March-  
Aug. 1811. because the post-office conveyed under one cover only a limited number of quarto or foolscap pages. Disdaining gossip and the frivolities of ordinary correspondence, the writers launch forth at once on a boundless sea of speculation. Does God exist? what idea shall we attach to this word "God"? shall we name God the soul and essence of universal nature, and if so is this being identical with the Jehovah of the Jewish nation? are Christian ethics reconcilable with a true and complete conception of virtue? has man fallen? is there a harmony in the universe, or is all nature but a welter of confusion? does the soul of man perish with the body? To answer each and all of these questions Shelley addresses himself with an unlimited confidence that truth can be found, with a conviction that reason is the instrument by which to discover truth, and a resolve for his own part that he will follow reason even through sadness and gloom. Intellectual courage and a certain dialectical skill are united with a surprising ignorance of the complexity of the problems attacked, and with some of that audacity which was at once a merit and a defect of revolutionary thinkers of the time, who had not conceived the historical method, and were eager to settle all things by abstract reasonings.

In Shelley there existed two contending spirits, each as yet in adolescence—the poet and the dialectician; the one all sensibility, enthusiasm, imagination; the other proud to be styled an "undivided votary of reason," and proudly rejecting the evidence of the heart, or analyzing each pulse of feeling until all pulsation ceased under the process of analysis. Both the poet and the dialectician were still in their nonage; Shelley's enthusiasms were crude and often undiscerning; his reasonings, while they endeavoured to soar high, were slenderly based. Much of the history of Shelley's mind lies in the gradual submission of his intellect to the wisdom which life and experience bring, while yet it retained in a rare degree its spring

CHAP. IV. and power of recoil against the world; and in the gradual  
 March-  
 Aug. 1811. clarifying of his zeals and enthusiasms, until at their best they  
 became, not fire without light, but pure and luminous ardours.  
 And the virtue of Shelley's life lies in this, that, through all  
 delusions and errors, it was a progress to the end; no base  
 retreats, no confused counter-movement, no terrified reaction.  
 Seeking for light in boyhood, however gropingly, he advanced  
 towards the light in his manhood with a firmer step. Loving  
 well in boyhood, he learnt, though ever liable to error, to love  
 wisely before the close, but never ceased to love. Through  
 shock and disappointment he attained, not apathy or ennui,  
 but renewed and saner hopes. At nineteen the ferment and  
 effervescence of intellect and heart might make a thoughtful  
 observer at once sanguine and misgiving. Yet in one tempted  
 by his position and the age in which he lived to selfish  
 pleasures and worldly views, it is much to find in early man-  
 hood a native superiority to all brute passions, a rare disinte-  
 restedness, a habit already fixed of judging things and persons  
 by unworldly standards, a restless desire to find and follow  
 the truth, a generous over-estimating of others as compared  
 with himself, and, save in some untoward mood or moment,  
 a delicate and faultless courtesy. These we certainly find, and  
 for their sake can forgive imperfect reasonings and the folly  
 of misdirected enthusiasm.

It was Shelley's intention to quit Field Place early in  
 July and join his friend Hogg in York. He ordered his  
 lodgings, and looked forward with pleasure to the luxury of  
 "unrestrained converse." Mr. Westbrook had, indeed, invited  
 his daughters' friend and correspondent to accompany him  
 and the Miss Westbrooks to Wales; they were about to  
 spend part of the summer at Aberystwith. A previous in-  
 vitation to Wales had come from Shelley's cousin, Mr. Thomas  
 Grove, who had purchased an estate—ten thousand acres of  
 wild hill and valley—five miles from Rhayader, in Radnor-  
 shire, and was now converting the waste into a paradise.

Shelley had accepted his cousin's invitation, and intended, on leaving Mr. Grove's house, to meet the Westbrooks at Aberystwith. Yet his thoughts tended longingly towards Hogg; and when there seemed to be a chance that Hogg might become a secret visitor at Field Place, Shelley resolved that he would accompany his friend on his return journey to the north. The clandestine visit never took place. Now, however, the desire for renewed companionship with Hogg had grown paramount, and Shelley decided to reach Wales, after a week in London with "old Westbrook," by a circuitous route, which should include York upon the way. Friendship had proved of stronger charm for him than salmon-fishing or view-hunting. But a decree stood written in the books of fate that whenever Shelley announced his intention of steering to any one point of the compass he should find himself moving towards another. It had been arranged that he was to possess two hundred pounds a year, but his father still held the purse-strings; and Mr. Timothy Shelley, whose opinion that the undutiful youngsters must be separated had not changed, informed his son that he might, if he pleased, go to York, but, should he do so, all expectation of money must cease. Shelley saw the imprudence of open warfare. It seemed best to accept his cousin's invitation to Cwm Elan. He would make but a brief halt in London; transact some business there; call on Miss Hitchener, who expected to be in town early in July; then travel to Wales on foot, "for the purpose of better remarking the manners and dispositions of the peasantry;"\* and, after his visit to Mr. Grove, strike northwards to his friend, dropping the name of Shelley and becoming for the nonce "Mr. Peyton," in whose movements his father, unless a rare diviner, could feel no special interest.

Cwm Elan, the glen of the Elan, lies to the south-west of Rhayader, among the most romantic mountains of Radnor-

\* Letter to Miss Hitchener: Field Place, June 25, 1811.



CHAP. IV. shire. Some years before Shelley's visit W. Lisle Bowles had spent part of a summer as Mr. Grove's guest, and had celebrated in his verse the beauty of rock and stream and woodland.\* The Elan, a tributary of the Wye, descends through a narrow glen between mountains of slate and limestone, on whose sides mingle alder, and birch, and oak, and mountain-ash. Beyond that point where the Elan is joined by her sister-stream, the Clearwen, the mountains draw closer and rise to higher solitudes, while below the waters flash over huge craggy fragments with a swifter motion and a more exulting voice. Having crossed a wooden bridge some way up the glen, the traveller in Shelley's time would find himself in Mr. Grove's lawn, which extended from the house and followed the course of the river. The special charm of the landscape lay in its union of wild loveliness with the grace and ornament of human culture. Above rose the precipices and barren reaches of the hills; below foamed and fell the mountain-stream; and here in their midst lay meadow and lawn, corn-field and clover-field, clear pathways and the abode of man. A mile higher up the stream a rude bridge of branches had been flung from rock to rock, beneath which, at a depth of thirty feet, the Elan leaped and swirled. If "the family of floods" possesses power over the minds of poets, as one of the greatest among them has testified, here was a place where such power might well be felt and acknowledged.

Shelley arrived at Cwm Elan in no condition to enjoy its beauty. His days in London had been occupied with "pressing and urgent business," the nature of which we are left to conjecture. The July sun loaded the air with fire; sleepless nights made no protecting barrier between day and day. The shock of his expulsion from University College, the

\* "Coombe-Ellan," a blank-verse poem of three hundred and fifty lines, which appeared in 1798. It shows considerable descriptive power, and much genuine delight in landscape.

consequent struggle with his father, the money embarrass-  
ments of the spring, the pains of disappointed love, the failure  
—causing disappointment hardly less keen—of his plans for  
Elizabeth's union with Hogg,—each and all of these had told  
upon an organization high-strung, and therefore delicate; and  
the journey to Wales, though probably not on foot as at first  
intended, had sufficed to exhaust energies already overtasked.  
A short but violent nervous illness was the result. "Stoic as  
I profess myself," he wrote to Miss Hitchener,\* "whilst yet  
this chain of clay fetters our nobler energies, it will at times  
subdue them; it will at times remind us, and that forcibly,  
how mutually dependent on each other are mind and body."  
It was an additional cause of vexation to learn on his recovery  
that his father, by some mysterious means, had discovered all  
about the proposed visit of Hogg to Field Place, and Shelley's  
intended journey with him to York. Mr. Shelley was highly  
incensed at his son's undutifulness, presumption, and man-  
œuvring. Nor did the company of Mr. and Mrs. Grove serve  
to divert Shelley's mind from its own broodings. "I am now  
with people," he wrote, "who, strange to say, never *think*. I  
have, however, much more of my own society than of theirs."†  
And to Hogg, "I am all solitude, as I cannot call the society  
here an alternative of it. I must stay here, however, to recruit  
my finances, compelled now to acknowledge poverty an evil."  
"I am what the sailors call banyaning. I do not see a soul;  
all is gloomy and desolate. I amuse myself, however, with  
reading Darwin, climbing rocks, and exploring this scenery."‡

Fortunately, though Cwm Elan was five miles from the  
nearest post-office, it was possible to despatch letters and to  
receive letters in reply; not, indeed, without miserable delays,  
for the mails were delivered only thrice a week, and went out  
two hours after their arrival. "The post," exclaimed Shelley

\* Cwm Elan; no date, but postmark July 15, 1811.

† To Miss Hitchener: Cwm Elan, July 26, 1811.

‡ Hogg's "Life of Shelley," vol. i. pp. 387, 391, 392.

CHAP. IV. impatiently, "is here what the waves of hell are to Tantalus."

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Aug. 1811.

Yet the Rhayader coach, in its periodic outgoings, bore not a few missives to Captain Pilfold, to Mrs. Shelley, to Hogg, to Miss Hitchener in her small country town of Sussex. The discussion with his philosophic Egeria now trended away from theology in the direction of politics or, as we now say, sociology. Equality—is it attainable? If unattainable, yet is it not an ideal towards which society may perpetually advance? Precisely as the individual ought constantly to seek perfection—thus argued Shelley—though he must for ever remain imperfect, so communities of men ought endlessly to pursue, though they may never wholly possess, the ideal of equality. With a juster distribution of happiness and wealth of toil and leisure, would not crime and the temptation to crime almost cease to exist? "But this paradise is all visionary!" Shelley wrote, meeting in advance an objection of his correspondent. "Why is it visionary? Have you tried? The first inventor of a plough doubtless was looked upon as a mad innovator; he who altered it from its original absurd form doubtless had to contend with great prejudices in its disfavour."\* Not for the poor man's sake alone did Shelley desire a more equal division of labour and of riches. "It is found," he writes, "that the vilest cottager is often happier than the proud lord of his manorial rights. Is it fit that the most frightful passions of human nature should be let loose, by an unnatural compact of society, upon this unhappy aristocrat? Is he not to be pitied when, by an hereditary possession of a fortune, which, if divided, would have very different effects, he is, as it were, predestined to dissipation, ennui, self-reproach, and (to crown the climax) a death-bed of despairing inutility?"† But all classes of society, high and low, felt the fatal effects of the present *régime*, in which the extremes of poverty and of wealth stood over against each

\* To Miss Hitchener: Cwm Elan, July 26, 1811.

† Ibid., Thursday [July 25, 1811].

other in ill-concealed antagonism, and the seeds of inter-CHAP. IV.  
necine war lurked everywhere in the soil, waiting only for  
some favourable chance to spring up as armed men. "I will  
relate to you an anecdote," Shelley wrote to Miss Hitchener March-  
Aug. 1811.  
soon after his arrival at Cwm Elan. "It is a striking one—  
the only adventure I have met with here. My window is  
over the kitchen. In the morning I threw it up, and had  
nearly finished dressing, when 'For charity's dear sake' met  
my ear. These words were pronounced with such sweetness,  
that on turning round I was surprised to find them uttered by  
an old beggar, to whom in a moment the servant brought  
some meat. I ran down to give him something. He appeared  
extremely grateful. I tried to enter into conversation with  
him—in vain! I followed him a mile, asking a thousand  
questions. At length I quitted him, finding by this remark-  
able observation that perseverance was useless: 'I see by  
your dress that you are a rich man. They have injured me  
and mine a million times. You appear to me well intentioned,  
but I have no security of it while you live in such a house  
as that or wear such clothes as those. It would be charity to  
quit me.'"<sup>\*</sup> With a mind moving among abstractions, and at  
the same time imaginative as was Shelley's, such an incident  
acquires large meanings and becomes, as it were, symbolic and  
representative.

Now for the first time Shelley was among mountain  
solitudes, and heard the voices of mountain torrents; but the  
power of hills was not upon him. He saw, but felt not, the  
wonder, the beauty, and the terror of lonely places among the  
clouds or stars. "This is most divine scenery," he wrote to  
Hogg, "but all very dull, stale, flat, and unprofitable; indeed,  
the place is a very great bore."<sup>†</sup> The poet in Shelley at this  
time was trammelled and taken in the toils by the psychologist  
and metaphysician; and if he were to break loose and regain

<sup>\*</sup> To Miss Hitchener: Cwm Elan; no date; postmark July 15, 1811.

<sup>†</sup> Hogg, "Life of Shelley," vol. i. p. 386.

CHAP. IV. his freedom, it must be by vigorous action rather than by words or thoughts. "The sport of unreflecting sensation, alive to enthusiasm the most irrational"—so Shelley had described himself to Hogg;\* but all enthusiasms, he declares, whether in religion, politics, or morality, are "equally, inextricably fatuous." It was now Shelley's aspiration to be a philosopher guided by the sole light of reason. When he felt the knight-errant stirring within him, instantly he summoned forth the philosopher to read aloud a lecture against knight-errantry. "I am no admirer of knights," he said to Hogg, "and if we were errants, you should have the tilting all to yourself."† For some time past he had been occupied less with poetry than with certain moral and metaphysical essays, which he offered, while in Wales, to the publisher Stockdale. He had acquired a habit of observing and analyzing his own feelings, and of investigating their causes, which he felt to be fatal to the spontaneity of natural delights. He warned Miss Hitchener, as one might who had tasted of the bitter fruit of knowledge, that the pursuit of truth does not bring with it happiness. "I recommend reason—why? Is it because since I have devoted myself unreservedly to its influencing I have never felt happiness? I have rejected all fancy, all imagination; I find that all pleasure resulting to self is thereby completely annihilated."‡ To one whose eye for ever pores on the phenomena of the world of mind in order to detect their secret, even the pursuit of virtue becomes a passionless recognition of the law of reason, and a joyless self-surrender to that law. "It is this habit [of analyzing our own thoughts], acquired by length of solitary labour, never then to be shaken off, which induces gloom; which deprives the being thus affected of any anticipation or retrospection of happiness, and leaves him eagerly in pursuit of virtue, yet (apparent paradox) pursuing it without the weakest

\* Hogg, "Life of Shelley," vol. i. p. 406.

† Ibid., p. 411.

‡ To Miss Hitchener: Field Place, June 11, 1811.

stimulus. It is this against which I intended to caution CHAP. IV.  
 you; this is the tree which it is dangerous to eat, but which March-  
 I have fed upon to satiety." \* At nineteen a mood or a Aug. 1811.  
 tendency is apt enough to become for a time a rôle; and Shelley, doubtless, in describing his impotence to enjoy, idealizes the actual facts of his experience; but all through his life his eye was fine to observe and keen to distinguish the fleeting outlines of the evanescent phenomena of feeling. In the summer of 1811 his delight in mountain and vale and stream was tracked and hunted down and done to death by his passion for psychological analysis. "This country of Wales," he wrote, "is exceedingly grand; rocks piled on each other to tremendous heights, rivers formed into cataracts by their projections, and valleys clothed with woods, present an appearance of enchantment. But why do they enchant? Why is it more affecting than a plain? It cannot be innate; is it acquired? Thus does knowledge lose all the pleasure which involuntarily arises by attempting to arrest the fleeting phantom as it passes. Vain attempt; like the chemist's ether, it evaporates under our observation; it flies from all but the slaves of passion and sickly sensibility who will not analyze a feeling." † And again, "Nature is here marked with the most impressive characters of loveliness and grandeur. Once I was tremulously alive to tones and scenes; the habit of analyzing feelings, I fear, does not agree with this. It is spontaneous, and when it becomes subject to consideration ceases to exist. But you do right to indulge feeling where it does not militate with reason. I wish I could too. This valley is covered with trees; so are partly the mountains that surround it. Rocks piled on each other to an immense height and clouds intersecting them, in other places waterfalls midst the umbrage of a thousand shadowy trees, form the principal features of the scenery. I am not wholly uninfluenced by its magic in my

\* To Miss Hitchener: Field Place, June 20, 1811.

† To Miss Hitchener: Cwm Elan; no date; postmark July 15.

CHAP. IV. lonely walks." \* Various distracting interests divided his attention, and the hills and waters will tell their more intimate secrets only to one whose heart is vacant of alien hopes or fears, and passionately fixed upon them.

March-  
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"I am more astonished at the grandeur of the scenery," Shelley wrote to Hogg towards the end of July, "than I expected. I do not *now* much regard it; I have other things to think of."† Other and unexpected things indeed! Mr. Westbrook and his daughters had gone to their house at Aberystwith, some thirty miles from Rhayader. Eliza and Harriet did not quite forget that their interesting friend was among the mountains, and with no congenial companion at hand. Letters came more frequently than before from Harriet and Eliza, and with one of these a novel by Mrs. Opie to beguile his solitude. Hogg, who as early as May had arrived at an "odd conclusion" about Eliza Westbrook,‡ which Shelley declined to accept, now gave broader licence to his mocking pen. "Your jokes on Harriet Westbrook," wrote Shelley, "amuse me: it is a common error for people to fancy others in their own situation, but, if I know anything about love, I am *not* in love. I have heard from the Westbrooks, both of whom I highly esteem."§ The esteem, however, soon was mingled with alarm and intense anxiety. His friends had returned from Aberystwith to London, and urgent letters came in quick succession from Harriet. She was wretched; persecuted in her own home; about to be compelled to return to school—a school where, as Shelley knew, the black badge was hung around the throat for a small misdemeanour, and where Harriet had been shunned by her schoolfellows and styled "an abandoned wretch." She was happy only when she could

\* To Miss Hitchener: Cwm Elan, July 26, 1811.

† Hogg, "Life of Shelley," vol. i. p. 590.

‡ Shelley to Hogg: Field Place, May 17, 1811: Hogg, "Life of Shelley," vol. i. p. 379.

§ Shelley to Hogg; letter undated (about July 30, 1811): Hogg, "Life of Shelley," vol. i. p. 387.

give her heart in love; it was misery to live with no one near on whom her love could be bestowed. She was of no use to herself or to others; would it be wrong to make an end of her useless life? should she resist her father and refuse to return to school? She would be guided by Shelley's advice. Shelley was a philosopher, but a philosopher of nineteen. A beautiful girl of sixteen, the victim of oppression, chose him for her counsellor and placed her fate in his hands. As a philosopher he disdained knight-errantry; but reason and gratitude required that he should respond to her appeal. He wrote instantly advising resistance, and at the same time addressed a letter to Mr. Westbrook, commending gentler measures towards his daughter. Mr. Westbrook, inexorable, refused to be mollified. A despairing letter arrived from Harriet, in which she threw herself upon Shelley's protection. She would fly with him if he would but consent. It was the cry of Andromeda chained to the rock, while the obscene monster of brute tyranny opened his jaws, to Perseus riding high in air, and Perseus was pledged to abolish all brute tyrannies from the face of the earth. Shelley speedily took coach for London, but had time to anticipate his arrival by a letter to his cousin Charles Grove, saying that his decision was taken; that as for himself his own happiness had been altogether blighted when he lost the hope of his cousin's love, Charles's sister Harriet; that now the only thing worth living for was self-sacrifice, and that he therefore obeyed the summons of Harriet Westbrook which called him from his solitude in Wales. A postscript ended the letter, adapted from the words of Macbeth when the bell is struck which bids him to Duncan's murder—

“Hear it not, Percy; for it is a knell  
That summons thee to heaven or to hell.”

On arriving at London, Shelley lost no time in calling on Harriet; he was shocked by her altered looks, and ascribed

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CHAP. IV. them to the sufferings she had undergone from domestic persecution. Harriet, shrinking from the avowal, yet could not choose but undeceive him; her pale face and woebegone aspect meant that he had grown too dear to her, and that she feared he never could return her love. Shelley, among many perplexing things, saw one thing clear—it was in his power to chase away grief from one who loved him, and bring joy in its place. He did not hesitate to place his hand in hers, or falter in the promise to make her his own.

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Aug. 1811.

When the first glow of chivalric enthusiasm faded, and Shelley came out into the common light of day, his pulse sank and the world looked grey. He intended soon to visit his uncle at Cuckfield, but waited for some days longer in London, and called now and again on Harriet. All her brightness had returned, while he had a certain depression to conceal from her. It was probably on one of these days that he replied to a letter from Hogg, in which it seems that his friend had urged the duty of a legal marriage, for sake of her who would be the chief sufferer if law and custom were disregarded. "My arguments," Shelley wrote, "have been *yours*. They have been urged by the force of the gratitude which this occasion excited. But I yet remain in London; I remain embarrassed and melancholy. I am now dining at Grove's. Your letter has just been brought in; I cannot forbear just writing this. *Your* noble and exalted friendship, the prosecution of your happiness, can alone engross my impassioned interest. This, I fear"—Shelley speaks of his devoting himself to Harriet Westbrook—"more resembles exerted action than inspired passion."\* And a little later, "The late perplexing occurrence which called me

\* Hogg, "Life of Shelley," vol. i. pp. 395, 396. Shelley's letter in which the above passage occurs is undated, and is misplaced by Hogg. It yields no meaning unless placed between the date of Harriet's confession of love, and the departure of Shelley and Harriet for Scotland. By "exerted action" Shelley means a putting forth of the will, in contrast with love which is passionate and impulsive.

to town occupies my time, engrosses my thoughts. I shall tell you more of it when we meet, which I hope will be soon. It does not, however, so wholly occupy my thoughts but that you and your interests still are predominant." \* Once again Shelley's hopes for a union between his sister and his friend had revived; but he was unwilling to raise unfounded expectations, remembering as he did the anguish which he himself had felt on the loss of his cousin's love. "I know," he wrote, "how deep is the gulf of despair, and I will not, therefore, increase any one's height" (August 15).

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Under the influence of arguments advanced by Hogg, Shelley now brought himself to contemplate without repulsion the idea of a marriage duly celebrated with legal ceremony. "Reputation and its consequent advantages," he said, "are rights"—rights not to be forfeited without sufficient cause. "How useless to attempt by singular examples"—so Shelley reasoned—"to renovate the face of society, until reasoning has made so comprehensive a change as to emancipate the experimentalist from the resulting evils, and the prejudice with which his opinion (which ought to have weight for the sake of virtue) would be heard by the immense majority!" † Moreover, the social loss and suffering fell in a wholly disproportionate degree upon the woman. For his own part, he declared, he was indifferent to reputation; but a woman's happiness is fragile, all too easily shattered, and therefore to be guarded against shock or stroke.‡ Thus Shelley debated the question during the days of mid August. But on leaving London about this date for a visit to his uncle Pilfold, he had little expectation of being speedily required to put his new opinions into practice.§ While at Cuckfield he saw Miss

\* Shelley to Hogg: London, August 15, 1811: Hogg, "Life of Shelley," vol. i. p. 415.

† To Miss Hitchener: York; no date; postmark October 8, 1811.

‡ Same letter, and that to Hogg: London, August 15, 1811: "Life of Shelley," vol. i. p. 417.

§ "Not that I suppose it to be likely that *I* shall directly be called upon to

CHAP. IV. Hitchener for the second time—the press of business in July had prevented him from calling upon her when in town—and informed her that his present purpose was to devote himself to the study of medicine, and qualify himself for entering on the duties of a physician.\* He had assured Harriet, before bidding her farewell, that she had but to summon him and he would return to London. Not a week can have passed at Cuckfield and Field Place before the summons came. Her tormentors were still resolved to force her back to school; she was helpless and miserable without Percy. In fulfilment of his promise Shelley hastened to London; saw Harriet, and proposed immediate marriage as the means of delivering her from this relentless persecution. At John Grove's house in Lincoln's Inn Fields he arranged his plans, without the knowledge of his cousin John, but with his cousin Charles as aider and abettor. From Lincoln's Inn Fields one evening—it may have been Saturday, August 24—he wended his way to a small coffee-house in Mount Street, not far distant from Mr. Westbrook's house in Chapel Street, Grosvenor Square; thence he despatched a letter to Harriet, naming the hour at which he would be ready with a hackney-coach at the coffee-house door to receive her. One short night, and it

convince my attachment to either theory" (Shelley to Hogg: London, August 15, 1811: "Life of Shelley," vol. i. pp. 417, 418).

\* In a letter to Miss Hitchener, undated, but having indistinctly marked the postmark "19th" of some month, which must be the month of August, Shelley writes as if in Miss Hitchener's neighbourhood, assenting to her decision that there would be a certain impropriety in his dining with her as he had proposed. The next letter to Miss Hitchener is dated "York: Miss Dancer's, Coney Street," and was written on Shelley's return to York after his marriage. The postmark is October 8. Shelley writes, "When last I saw you I was about to enter into the profession of physic. I told you so. . . . In one short week how changed were all my prospects! How are we the slaves of circumstances! How bitterly I curse their bondage! Yet this [his marriage] was unavoidable." On October 11 Miss Hitchener wrote in reply, "When last I saw you I have no doubt but you fully intended the pursuit you named [*i.e.* the practice of physic], but this must have been secondary [*i.e.* to considerations of his duty towards Harriet Westbrook]. Circumstances might compel you to yield this and hasten your marriage. Here, then, was no equivocation; and as to marrying, that was due to Mrs. Shelley."

was the dawn of a memorable August day. Mr. Grove's CHAP. IV.  
March-  
Aug. 1811. servant called a coach, into which entered the cousins Bysshe and Charles; at the Mount Street coffee-house, some time before the hour appointed for Harriet's arrival, the coach drew up. A breakfast was ordered and was ended, and Harriet did not yet appear. While the bridegroom-designate waited at the door he beguiled the time by flinging the shells of the oysters on which they had breakfasted across the street, with the words, "Grove, this is a *Shelley* business!" Presently Harriet was seen tripping round the corner from Chapel Street, and the coach-wheels rattled towards the city inn from which the northern mails departed.\* There a livelong day of waiting was spent by the three—Harriet, Bysshe, and Charles—for the Edinburgh mail did not start until seven or eight in the evening. At last arrived the hour of departure, good-byes were said, and the fugitives were on the road for York.

It is right that a portion of the story which has here been told should be repeated in Shelley's own words. An extract from a letter to Hogg, written from Cwm Elan in the early days of August, and an extract from a letter to Miss Hitchener, written from York in the early days of October, will serve to exhibit not only the more important facts, but also the state of Shelley's feelings at the time.

*Shelley to Hogg.*

[No date; probably about August 3, 1811; postmark Rhayader.]

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You will perhaps see me before you can answer this; perhaps not; Heaven knows! I shall certainly come to York, but *Harriet Westbrook* will decide whether now or in three weeks. Her father has persecuted her in a most horrible way, by endeavouring

\* Mr. Charles Grove in 1857 named the Green Dragon in Gracechurch Street as the inn from which the mail-coach started, and in 1860 the Spread Eagle in the same street. It seems likely that he was mistaken, and that the inn was actually the Bull and Mouth, in Bull and Mouth Street (see Cary's "Traveller's Companion"—list of inns from which stage-coaches depart).

CHAP. IV. to compel her to go to school. She asked my advice: resistance  
 March- was the answer, at the same time that I essayed to mollify Mr.  
 Aug. 1811. Westbrook in vain! And in consequence of my advice *she* has  
 thrown herself upon *my* protection.

I set off for London on Monday. How flattering a distinction! I am thinking of ten million things at once.

What have I said? I declare quite *ludicrous*.\* I advised her to resist. She wrote to say that resistance was useless, but that she would fly with me, and threw herself upon my protection. We shall have £200 a year; when we find it run short, we must live, I suppose, upon love! Gratitude and admiration all demand that I should love her *for ever*. We shall see you at York. I will hear your arguments for matrimonialism, by which I am now almost convinced.

*Shelley to Miss Hitchener.*

Mr. Strickland's, Blake Street, York [Saturday, October 26, 1811 ?].

\* \* \* \* \*

I hesitate not a moment to write to you: rare though it be in this existence, communion with you can unite mental benefit with *pure* gratification. I will explain, however, the circumstances which caused my marriage: these must certainly have caused much conjecture in your mind. Some time ago, when my sister was at Mrs. Fenning's school, she contracted an intimacy with Harriet. At that period I attentively watched over my sister, designing, if possible, to add her to the list of the good, the disinterested, the free. I desired, therefore, to investigate Harriet's character; for which purpose I called on her, requested to correspond with her, designing that *her* advancement should keep pace with, and possibly accelerate, that of my sister. Her ready and frank acceptance of my proposal pleased me; and though with ideas the remotest to those which have led to this conclusion of our intimacy, I continued to correspond with her for some time. The frequency of her letters became greater during my stay in Wales. I answered them; they became interesting. They contained complaints of the irrational conduct of her relatives, and the misery of living where she could *love* no one. Suicide was with

\* The "ludicrous" thing is that Harriet should have chosen as protector a youth of nineteen, expelled from college, estranged in some degree from his family, and at the present moment in want of money.

her a favourite theme, and her total uselessness was urged as its defence. This I admitted, supposing she could prove her inutility, and that she was powerless. Her letters became more and more gloomy. At length one assumed a tone of such despair as induced me to quit Wales precipitately. I arrived in London. I was shocked at observing the alteration of her looks. Little did I divine its cause. She had become violently attached to me, and feared that I should not return her attachment. Prejudice made the confession painful. It was impossible to avoid being much affected; I promised to unite my fate to hers. I stayed in London several days, during which she recovered her spirits. I had promised, at her bidding, to come again to London. They endeavoured to compel her to return to a school where malice and pride embittered every hour. She wrote to me. I came to London. I proposed marriage, for the reasons which I have given you, and she complied. Blame me if thou wilt, dearest friend, for *still* thou art dearest to me; yet pity even this error if thou blamest me. If Harriet be not, at sixteen, all that you are at a more advanced age, assist me to mould a really noble soul into all that can make its nobleness useful and lovely. Lovely it is now, or I am the weakest slave to error.

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March-  
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A night and a day's rattling along the northern road brought the coach, in which were seated Shelley and Harriet Westbrook, to York; and while towards midnight they rested to change horses, Shelley found time to scribble a note to Hogg, which should be taken to his friend's lodging next morning. "I passed to-night with the mail," he wrote; "Harriet is with me. We are in a slight pecuniary distress. We shall have seventy-five pounds on Sunday, until when can you send ten pounds?" To take him on his way Shelley had borrowed a small sum from the elder Mr. Medwin, and he counted on soon receiving his quarterly allowance of fifty pounds, which probably became due on Sunday, September 1. An additional twenty-five pounds was expected by the wanderers, from what source we know not.\* Meanwhile there were the expenses

\* Possibly from Mr. Medwin; for Shelley, in his letter of October 28, 1811, to the Duke of Norfolk, speaks of his having requested a further loan from Medwin,

CHAP. IV. of almost a week in Edinburgh to be provided for, and Shelley  
 March—  
 Aug. 1811. relied for succour from Hogg's good fellowship. And so in darkness the fugitives bade farewell to the sleeping city, and bowled northwards still—over the great plain of York; through Durham, with its high-reared towers struck by the morning light; through the smoke and grime of Newcastle; under the battlements of Alnwick Castle, with its garrison of stone defenders; in sight of the sea and the mouth of Tweed as Berwick drew near;—northwards still, while darkness fell once more, and through the starlit hours, until in the grey of a third morning the coach drew up before the post-office in Edinburgh. A resting-place was found by the travellers, and then with as little delay as the circumstances permitted, in regular form, and with such ceremony as the Scottish law required, they joined hands as husband and wife. In the books of the Register House, Edinburgh, the entry may be seen—and it was a humorous freak of Mab to transform the illuminated poet, as here he is transformed, into a south-country sower of grain and breeder of oxen—"August 28, 1811. Percy Bysshe Shelley, farmer, Sussex, and Miss Harriet Westbrook, St. Andrew Church Parish, daughter of Mr. John Westbrook, London." The united ages of bride and bridegroom made thirty-five.

NOTE.—*Date of Shelley's departure from London with Harriet Westbrook.* The date of Shelley's marriage in Edinburgh was Wednesday, August 28, 1811. Two nights and part of a third were spent by the mail-coach on the road. The latest date, therefore, at which Shelley could have been in London is Sunday, August 25, at seven or eight o'clock in the evening of which day he and Harriet may have started on their journey. If my conjecture be well founded that Shelley's expectation of seventy-five pounds on "Sunday" (spoken of in the note left for Hogg in the inn at York) had reference to a quarter of his allowance of two hundred pounds a year, due as I suppose on Sunday, September 1, the note for Hogg must have been written on or after the night of Sunday, August 25 (otherwise "Sunday" would mean August 25). It seems highly probable, therefore, that Shelley left London on either Saturday evening, August 24, or Sunday evening, August 25. A letter to Miss Hitchener, with postmark August 19,

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which was refused when it became known that he had eloped with Harriet Westbrook.

shows that he was then in Sussex ; and Mr. Charles Grove speaks as if some days elapsed between Shelley's return to town, when summoned by Harriet from his uncle's house, and his departure with her to Scotland. "I was his companion on his visits to her, and finally accompanied them early one morning—I forget now the month or the date, but it might have been September—in a hackney-coach to the Green Dragon," etc.

CHAP. IV.

March-  
Aug. 1811.



## CHAPTER V.

## WANDERINGS.

EDINBURGH—YORK—KESWICK. AUGUST, 1811—FEBRUARY, 1812.

CHAP. V. WHEN Shelley, in the coach with Harriet, reached Edinburgh Aug. 1811—  
Feb. 1812. his scanty resources were exhausted. In a handsome house in the new-built George Street, on the side next to Princes Street, he found excellent ground-floor rooms, and was fortunate in alighting on a good-humoured landlord, to whom he explained his position—his present need, his expectation of speedy relief, and the object of his journey to Scotland. Would he take them in, Shelley asked, advance them money to get married, and supply their wants until a remittance came? The landlord cheerily assented on one condition—that Shelley should treat himself and his friends to a supper in honour of the wedding.\* In the mail-coach Shelley had happened to meet a young Scotch advocate, to whom he confided the motive of his flight, and from whom he ascertained the proper steps to take with a view to a speedy celebration of marriage. All things, therefore, were easily arranged and satisfactorily accomplished; and while the host, with his North British companions, made merry with friendly cracks and tales and bumpers of Scotch drink, Shelley and his bride were content to be alone. Certain frank familiarities of his landlord, and a threatened invasion of his retirement by the assembled roysterers at midnight, were vehemently

\* Peacock, "Memoirs of Shelley," Peacock's Works, vol. iii. p. 401.

resented by Shelley, who caught up his pistols and threatened to use them if they ventured upon such unwarranted and unbecoming liberties. Surprised to discover that there was in him something dangerous, the intruders prudently retreated.

CHAP. V.  
Aug. 1811-  
Feb. 1812.

Shelley's bride was young, beautiful, of a sweet and pliable disposition; strength of intellect and strength of character were lacking to her. She had received the education of a school-girl of sixteen, but as regards true culture in any direction was still a child. She was docile, and submitted her mind to such influences as were brought to play upon it, so that she soon caught up the words and phrases which Shelley used, and could even array her own thoughts in the shadows or simulacra of his. He spoke of reason, and truth, and freedom, and equality, and perfectibility; and she, with some uncertainty in dealing with these airy sounds, could also utter the terms of enchantment, and produce the cabala of revolution on her lips or with her pen. She loved to read, and especially to read aloud in her sweet, clear, equable voice. She had heard much about virtue from Bysshe, and liked best those books which frequently discoursed of virtue: what if they were occasionally tedious or commonplace, they were not tedious or commonplace to her! Does anything, indeed, bring solid satisfaction to an ordinary mind like a ponderous moral platitude? She sang pleasingly; and could scribble such *graffiti* as may be found in school-girls' copy-books, which, if sufficiently suggestive of humanity, they dignify with the name of caricatures. She was bright of temper, yet had known occasional moods of gloom and deep depression; unable to deal with shaping hands in the stuff which life presented, she felt the impatience of those who are not strong enough to disentangle a coil of evil circumstance. Though gentle and amiable, she might be rash or she might be obstinate. From the first Shelley was, doubtless, not insensible to her sweetness and brightness of nature. His chief thought had been to rescue her from misery, and bring back the light

CHAP. V. of joy to her eyes ; but he saw, or thought he saw, that she could be moulded into the form of gracious womanhood. Yet it is certain that at this time the qualities in woman which most kindled his imagination were not beauty, or sweetness and gentleness, but intellectual strength and passionate ardour of heart. If he had conceived a Cythna in 1811, her lineaments would have more nearly resembled those of Elizabeth Hitchener than those of his young bride.

Aug. 1811-  
Feb. 1812.

How to live upon love was a problem which Shelley found himself immediately required to solve. His quarterly allowance of fifty pounds, counted on as due by September 1, never came. Mr. Timothy Shelley had heard of Bysshe's flight, and was in towering indignation. Some of his overwrought feelings found relief in accusations against Mr. Medwin, who had lent the fugitive twenty-five pounds, but, in lending it, was wholly unaware of the purpose to which the money should be applied ; some escaped in troubled communications with the elder Mr. Hogg—for it was conjectured that Bysshe, having "set off for Scotland with a young female," might "make York on the way," and God only knew what might happen if "my young man" and "your young man" were to meet. But an afflicted father could at least cut off all supplies, and try whether starvation would bring the runaway to reason. It was the first time that Shelley, with another now depending upon him, felt the humiliations of penury. He wrote to his father with more vehemence of tone than he had hitherto allowed himself. He was here four hundred miles from any friend, exposed to all the insults of fortune, his allowance cut off, although it had been promised without proviso or limitation, and on the faith of that promise he had incurred obligations. To all which remonstrances Mr. Timothy Shelley replied by drawing the purse-strings tight, and by deploring the undutifulness and disrespect of his son's letters. Nor was any aid to be obtained from Harriet's father, who perhaps was of opinion that the best chance of extracting supplies from

Mr. Shelley lay in placing the responsibility for the runaway match and its immediate consequences wholly on Mr. Shelley's son. Should Mr. Westbrook come to the rescue, what hope was there of bounty from Field Place? Had it not been for jovial Uncle Pilfold, the days in Edinburgh would have been days of heart-corroding anxiety. Cheerful, generous letters and a bank-post bill came from the captain. To be confoundedly angry, he thought, is all very well, but to stop the supplies is a great deal too bad.\* Before the welcome enclosure came Shelley had suffered acutely, and the most romantic of northern cities could lay no spell upon his spirit. To the brilliant literary society of the Scottish capital he had no introduction; his eye was not fascinated by the presences of mountains and the sea, by the fantastic outlines of aerial piles seen amid the wreathing smoke of Auld Reekie, by the gloom of the Canongate illuminated with shafts of sunlight streaming from its intersecting wynds and alleys; nor was his imagination kindled by storied house or palace, and the voices of old, forgotten far-off things which haunt their walls. He felt that he had forfeited his freedom, and that the chain of debt was daily growing heavier. "My uncle," he afterwards wrote from York, "is a most generous fellow. Had he not assisted us we should still have been chained to the filth and commerce of Edinburgh. Vile as aristocracy is, commerce—purse-proud ignorance and illiterateness—is more contemptible." At a later date he learnt to think more justly of the grey metropolis, and was drawn back to Edinburgh by its culture and its recognition of intellect.

But all the days and hours of this singular honeymoon were not unhappy. On receiving Shelley's note, left at the inn as he passed through York, Hogg was about to start on a holiday excursion. Why not take the coach, and follow the fugitives

\* Hogg, "Life of Shelley," vol. i. p. 467. Hogg quotes the words, "to be confoundedly angry," etc., as if from a letter of Captain Pilfold's, but probably he was writing from a general impression of letters which he had seen, not actually quoting.

CHAP. V. to Scotland? One morning, early in September, a knock was  
Aug. 1811-  
Feb. 1812. heard at the door in George Street, a visitor was ushered into the front parlour, and Shelley had the joy of welcoming his friend, whose intended arrival had been announced by letter, and of introducing him to his bride. "Lovely," she appeared to Hogg—"bright, blooming, radiant with youth, health, and beauty." The college companions had not seen each other since they parted last April in the trellised parlour; now they were to renew the days of their inseparable comradeship and never to part again. A bedroom was found for Hogg at the top of the house. The morning was bright and breezy, so they would all visit Holyrood together, whence Shelley might return, if he pleased, to write letters, while his friend escorted Harriet to the summit of Arthur's Seat. It was a day of glee, sunshine, and rejoicing.

When the first tumult of spirits had subsided, the wedded pair and their new associate settled down to a regular way of living. Each morning before breakfast Bysshe would start off to obtain his letters at the post-office, sometimes bringing back with him for a regale combs of virgin honey almost too lovely to devour. Breakfast over, some hours of study would follow. In whatever part of the habitable globe Shelley found himself, he quickly discovered books, and before long would have collected a tolerable library. "He was active, observant, and intelligent in such purchases," says Hogg, "as he was in all other matters." In his frequent and precipitate movements from place to place he lost with ease what he had acquired at some pains and cost, and a new gathering began of such books as he coveted. "I have many times thought," Hogg wrote, "what an excellent collection of valuable books the poor poet would have owned, if all his different libraries, scattered about in distant localities, had been brought together under one roof and in one large room." In Edinburgh he probably borrowed more than he bought. One treatise of Buffon especially interested him, and he occupied his mornings with translating it

into English with a view to publication. Harriet, by his side, CHAP. V. was similarly engaged; the novels of Madame Cottin, then of recent date, and distinguished by their sensibility united with a moral purpose, had caught her fancy, and morning after morning she advanced steadily with a version of the affecting tale "Claire d'Albe," designed by its authoress as a warning against the fatal consequences of a woman's first fault. "She rendered the two volumes," says Hogg, "exactly and correctly; and wrote the whole out fairly, without blot or blemish, upon the smoothest, whitest, finest paper, in a small, neat, flowing, and legible feminine hand." After dinner the three friends went forth for an afternoon ramble, returning at dusk to tea. The little maid who waited on them had quickly discovered that the unvarying element among their daily wants was tea; and after many ringings of the bell she would suddenly appear—intruding at the door a small untidy head—with the exclamation, "Oh! the kittle!" in unmusical northern accent, from which Shelley shrank in agony. "Send her away, Harriet," he would cry, rushing wildly into a corner and covering his face with his hands. "Oh! send her away; for God's sake send her away!" "We had," confesses Hogg, "to our shame be it spoken, a childish mischievous delight in tormenting him—in catching the shy virgin and making her speak in his presence." The kettle having done its duty and tea being ended, Harriet would begin to read aloud in her clear sweet voice, and would not readily leave off. "Morality," says Hogg, with amused superciliousness, "was her favourite theme; she found most pleasure in works of a high ethical tone; Telemachus and Belisarius were her chosen companions." Admirable moralists, no doubt, were Fenelon and Marmontel, but there are *longueurs* in their writings; and Fenelon and Marmontel, never ending, still beginning, though delivered with good accent, may produce effects like those of poppy or mandragora. Bysshe had a fatal tendency to drowsiness about the hour when in his college rooms he would coil himself upon the hearthrug in a

Aug. 1811—  
Feb. 1812.

CHAP. V. sweet and mighty oblivion. "His innocent slumbers," declares  
 Aug. 1811—his friend, "gave serious offence, and his neglect was fiercely  
 Feb. 1812. resented; he was stigmatized as an inattentive wretch." Before  
 bedtime the three companions would perhaps stroll out once  
 again, to view from Princes Street the comet, nightly increasing  
 in brilliancy, and to enjoy the cool air beneath the stars.

So passed the Edinburgh days, only varied by the due  
 recurrence of the sabbath, then observed in North Britain  
 with a more Mosaic precision than is exacted in these de-  
 generate latter times. On one occasion Shelley, accompanied  
 only by Hogg, attended divine service in the kirk. Psalms  
 and prayers, though many and long-drawn, were but a light  
 affliction compared with the preacher's abundant and savoury  
 discourse. Had Shelley possessed a keen eye for physiognomy,  
 he could hardly have found a more delightful study than that  
 of the faces of a Scotch congregation while sitting under their  
 favourite minister—faces at once critical and devout, shrewd  
 and idealistic; but he knew not how to use his opportunity.  
 "I never saw Bysshe so dejected," says Hogg, "so desponding,  
 so despairing; he looked like the picture of perfect wretched-  
 ness; the poor fellow sighed piteously as if his heart would  
 break." After such a description it taxes our faith in the  
 Shelley legend, as related by his friend, to believe that he  
 volunteered his attendance at the evening catechizing of  
 children and domestics. "Wha was Adam?" shouted the  
 catechist; no answer came. In louder and angrier tone  
 followed the second question, "Wha's the deil?" "This,"  
 declares the chronicler, "was too much. Shelley burst into  
 a shrieking laugh and rushed wildly out of doors."

Five weeks in Edinburgh amply sufficed to weary Shelley; he was impatient to be gone, and as Hogg must return to his conveyancer's chambers in York, Shelley and Harriet must needs accompany him to that ancient city, there to reside for a year, at the end of which period "we were all," says Hogg, "to remove to London, and to dwell there together 'for ever,'

writing, reading, and being read to." \* To render the journey CHAP. V.  
 more agreeable to Harriet they travelled in a post-chaise, and Aug. 1811—  
 halted for a night at Belford and for a night at Darlington. Feb. 1812.  
 October mists and rains enveloped them as they drove. But Harriet was superior to accidents of the weather; some novels by Holcroft lay at her side, from which, as the chaise rolled on, she read aloud "almost incessantly." Bysshe, who hated the closeness and confinement, became at times restive, and pleaded pathetically, but in vain, for a relaxation of the rigorous law of perpetual Holcroft. If the carriage drew up, and Hogg, the man of affairs, went bustling about luggage, Shelley would have vanished before boxes and trunks had been counted; and a poet stolen or strayed, it was found, is not easily recovered. "Once at Berwick," writes his friend, "when Harriet had taken her seat and all was ready, Bysshe was missing; but he was retaken on fresh pursuit, being captured by myself, as he was standing on the Walls in a drizzling rain, gazing mournfully at the wild and dreary sea, with looks not less wild and dreary." The third evening—close of a dull autumnal day—brought the travellers in rain and mire to York. Lodgings were sought in spite of the dimness and the mist, and were found at the Miss Dancers', No. 20, Coney Street—"a dismal and poverty-stricken house," within hearing of the river which the back garden overlooked; "the dingy dwelling," so Hogg describes it, "of certain dingy old milliners."

Had Shelley's imagination dwelt lovingly in the past, he would have found much to interest him in the winding streets of York, in its venerable relics of antiquity, above all in its majestic minster. The old city might have become to him what Strasburg was to Goethe in his youth. But Reason was a pedant who thought scorn of history, and certain humani-

\* Hogg speaks of "six weeks" spent in Edinburgh. But a letter from Shelley to Miss Hitchener, dated "York," bears the postmark October 8, and may have been written two or three days earlier. "It was the end of October," says Hogg, speaking of the journey to York. At latest it must have been in the beginning of that month.



CHAP. V. tarian abstractions—not without their elements of worth—cut  
 Aug. 1811- Shelley off from the heritage of human thought and love and  
 Feb. 1812. aspiration which past generations of men have left for the  
 study, the wonder, and the joy of us who follow after. The  
 noble cathedral appeared to him to be but a huge erection of  
 unreason, a waste of barbaric pomp. “When I contemplate  
 these gigantic piles of superstition,” he wrote to a friend, “when  
 I consider, too, the leisure for the exercise of mind which the  
 labour which erected them annihilated—I set them down as  
 so many retardations of the period when Truth becomes  
 omnipotent. Every useless ornament—the pillars, the iron  
 railings, the juttings of wainscot, and (as Southey says)  
 the cleaning of grates—are all exertions of bodily labour,  
 which, though trivial separately considered, when united de-  
 stroy a vast proportion of this invaluable leisure. How many  
 things could we do without!”\* The youthful Stoic, justly  
 incensed against the dull oppressions of luxury, and desirous  
 to simplify life, had not reflected that the freest and most  
 exquisite play of mind begins when utility becomes the  
 occasion and ground for a quest after beauty—beauty endlessly  
 sought and never wholly attained. York, with its “gigantic  
 pile of superstition,” its feudal memorials, its air of gentility,  
 its provincial interests and events—the assizes, the races, the  
 county ball—could have no special charms for Shelley. Hogg  
 was in York, and that was much. It was Shelley’s hope that  
 his other friend—dearer, if possible, than Hogg—Miss Hitch-  
 ener, might soon become their guest; but the words of his  
 invitation do not sound as if he possessed a superfluity of joy:  
 “How happy should I be to see you! There is no need to  
 tell you this; and my happiness is not so great that it be-  
 comes a friend to be sparing in that society which constitutes  
 its only charm.”†

Anxiety about the means to live again harassed Shelley.

\* To Miss Hitchener: York, October, 1811; postmark October 18.

† Ibid.

The captain's bounty was exhausted; Mr. Timothy Shelley CHAP. V. was still indignant, refused all aid, and even commanded that Aug. 1811-  
Feb. 1812. his son's name should never be mentioned in his presence. Ten days or more had passed in York, and the need of some regular provision grew urgent. Shelley resolved to hasten south, to make his uncle's house at Cuckfield a resting-place for a couple of nights, and thence seek an interview with his father in order to urge in person his claims. "I had thought," he wrote, "that this blind resentment had long been banished to the regions of dulness, comedies, and farces, or was used merely to augment the difficulties and consequently the attachment of the hero and heroine of a modern novel. I have written frequently to this thoughtless man [his father], and am now determined to visit him, in order to try the force of truth; though I must confess I consider it nearly as hyperbolical as 'music rending the knotted oak.'"<sup>\*</sup> It was arranged that Harriet's sister Eliza should accompany Bysshe on his return to York. The journey was not wholly without a prospect of pleasure; for although his stay in Sussex was to be brief, he was determined not to leave Cuckfield without having seen Miss Hitchener.

His friendship with Miss Hitchener had halted for a time in uncertainty, and then made a sudden and notable advance. In August, shortly before his marriage, his letters had eagerly maintained that equality is the ideal towards which society tends as it advances to perfection. The abstract doctrine unexpectedly assumed a personal aspect; the Sussex schoolmistress had with a certain dignity alluded to the social disparity that existed between her correspondent—the heir of an ancient family—and herself. It was enough to rouse all the indignant generosity of Shelley's nature. "You remind me thus," he wrote, "of a misfortune which I could never have obviated; not that the sturdiest aristocrat could suppose that a real difference subsisted

<sup>\*</sup> To Miss Hitchener.

CHAP. V. between me, who am sprung from a race of rich men, and you whom talents and virtue have lifted from the obscurity of poverty. If there is any difference, surely the balance of real distinction would fall on your side. You remind me of what I hate, despise, and shudder at." \* Hard upon this outbreak had followed Shelley's marriage. How would his friend take the event? He had told her that he was about to study medicine—would she suspect him of having concealed his real intentions? What would one so clear-minded and truthful think of his submission to the legal ceremony? How would she regard his union with a person intellectually inferior to her and to him? What would be her feeling towards Harriet? Shelley allowed several weeks to pass before addressing a letter to Hurstpierpoint. When at length he made his confession, all his doubts and anxious questionings were set to rest by Miss Hitchener's generous words: he had been guilty of no concealment or reserve; as to marrying, that was due to Mrs. Shelley; "to say how sincerely I wish you both happiness does not convey half my feeling." Shelley's answer to this letter is an overflow of unmeasured delight and gratitude; he will now dare to call his feeling towards Elizabeth Hitchener *love*—the love of a soul for a soul; henceforth he will be wholly hers; every thought shall be shared with her; her judgment will serve him as a criterion of right and wrong less fallible than his own consciousness. Such an union of soul as this, owning no subjection to time, or change, or death, becomes the truest evidence of our immortality. He is about to visit Sussex seeking for lucre; but even the consideration of money may be ennobled by the thought that the true use of wealth is to procure freedom for those whom we love and who will apply their freedom to high ends. "I desire money because I think I know the use of it. It commands labour, it gives leisure; and to give leisure to those who will employ it in the forwarding

\* To Miss Hitchener [August 19, 1811].

of truth is the noblest present an individual can make to CHAP. V.  
Aug. 1811-  
Feb. 1812.  
the whole. I will open to you my views. On my coming to the estate which, worldly considered, is mine, but which actually I have not more, perhaps not so great a right to as you, justice demands that it should be shared between my sisters. Does it or does it not? Mankind are as much my brethren and sisters as they; *all* ought to share. This cannot be; it must be confined. But thou art a sister of my soul; *he* [probably Hogg] is its brother. Surely these have a right." \*

Three days travelling on the outside of the coach brought Shelley, alert and bright-eyed in spite of sleepless nights, to his uncle's house at Cuckfield. The kindly captain made haste to invite Miss Hitchener to dine with his nephew on Tuesday, October 22. What talk of virtue, disinterestedness, freedom, equality, there must have been that evening, when Elizabeth Hitchener arrived expecting a sympathetic debate on these high themes! Meanwhile Bysshe had "tried the force of truth" on "that mistaken man," his father. It is not certain whether the father and son actually met, or whether the negotiation was conducted wholly in writing; in either case the immediate result was the same—nothing was to be obtained from Mr. Shelley; let Bysshe charm never so wisely, his father was impenetrable as the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear. And yet worse—Mrs. Shelley, who hitherto had befriended Bysshe, now seemed to him to have turned traitor. Disappointed and unsuccessful, Shelley hastened through London, and was again in York before October closed, having been absent little more than a week.

Eliza Westbrook had not waited for Shelley's escort, and was already installed in the place of supreme authority at York.† It was Harriet's misfortune—one natural and almost

\* To Miss Hitchener: York, postmark October 18.

† Some time previous to October 26 the Shelleys had moved into new lodgings—"Mr. Strickland's, Blake Street, York." Nothing in the letters to Miss Hitchener tends to confirm the statement that Eliza Westbrook arrived before Shelley at York, and it is given only on Hogg's authority.

CHAP. V. inevitable—to lean much upon her elder sister, and defer in  
 Aug. 1811—most matters to her judgment. For the careless freedom of  
 Feb. 1812. the earlier days in York a strict *régime* was substituted. It had not previously been suspected that Harriet possessed any nerves; now, says Hogg, “we heard of little else. . . . The house lay, as it were, under an interdict; all our accustomed occupations were suspended; study was forbidden; reading was injurious—to read aloud might terminate fatally; to go abroad was death, to stay at home the grave. Bysshe became nothing; I,” adds the narrator, “of course very much less than nothing—a negative quantity of a very high figure.” Eliza’s own authority with the young people was great; backed by an appeal to the highest of sanctions, “What would Miss Warne say?” it became irresistible. Miss Warne—an august but impalpable presence—overawed all exercise of private judgment. Having invoked her influence, Eliza could for a time cease to keep watch over Harriet’s nerves, and shroud herself in the penetralia of her bedroom, there zealously devoting herself, brush in hand, to the interests of her glossy black hair. “The poor poet,” declares Hogg, “was overwhelmed by the affectionate invasion; he lay prostrated under the insupportable pressure of our domiciliary visit.”

Such, in miniature, is Hogg’s picture of the state of things at York on Shelley’s arrival from Sussex. It must be taken with reserve, for Miss Westbrook desired—not without cause—to stand between the bride of sixteen and her husband’s friend. She necessarily took up the position of guardian to Harriet, of antagonist to Hogg; and that such a person should be a successful antagonist was insufferable. She might well have found Harriet’s nerves disturbed, and have been of opinion that walks with Hogg and readings aloud, even of such tranquilizing and edifying works as Tele-machus and Belisarius, would not tend to promote Harriet’s happiness. “My dear friend Hogg, that noble being, is with me,” Shelley had written to Miss Hitchener, “and will be

always." On leaving for the south he had placed his young wife with entire trust in his friend's care. He had not long returned before he perceived with pain that Harriet's behaviour towards Hogg was greatly altered, and that she now regarded him with aversion. When he touched on the subject, she replied with dark hints of Hogg's unworthiness, which filled Bysshe with vague alarms. Pressing his inquiry, he learnt with dismay that the friend whom he had looked on as the realized ideal of upright and generous manhood, yielding to ignoble passion, had betrayed the trust reposed in him—had declared to Harriet that he "loved" her, had implored her to permit his "love." The first advances had been made immediately on their arrival at York from Edinburgh. Harriet had forbidden the intruder on her peace ever to mention the subject again, and, hoping to hear no more of it, had preferred to leave Shelley ignorant of what had occurred. During his absence in Sussex the odious importunity had been renewed. Harriet had appealed to her persecutor's sense of right, and seemingly not without effect, for he admitted the error of his conduct, and proposed, as the only expiation in his power, to inform Bysshe by letter of the whole. Fearful of the effects of such a communication on Shelley's mind while he was far from her, Harriet had forbidden this; and it was on the following day—sooner than had been expected—that Shelley reached York.

Shelley's first feeling on receiving this disclosure was not indignant wrath and the pride of wounded honour, but that shock of mind which attends a shattered ideal—a sense of wreck and ruin which would have approached despair, had he not believed it possible that his friend might rise from this lamentable fall. If Hogg were base, what was to be thought of human nature in general? If that countenance "on which," says Shelley, "I have sometimes gazed till I fancied the world could be reformed by gazing too," were but a mask concealing unworthy thoughts and desires, what hope could there be for

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CHAP. V. mankind? But no—he would think of his friend as dread-  
 Aug. 1811- fully mistaken, the victim of prejudice, yet not wholly lost.\*  
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In such a temper Shelley sought an explanation with Hogg. "We walked to the fields beyond York," he tells Miss Hitchener; "I desired to know fully the account of this affair. I heard it *from him*, and I believe he was sincere. All I can recollect of that terrible day was that I pardoned him—fully, freely pardoned him; that I would still be a friend to him, and hoped soon to convince him how lovely virtue was; that his crime, not himself, was the object of my detestation; that I value a human being not for what it has been, but for what it is; that I hoped the time would come when he would regard this horrible error with as much disgust as I did. He said little; he was pale, terror-struck, remorseful." † To plead with his friend for righteousness was the first need of Shelley's heart, and such anger as he felt took upon itself the forms of sorrowing condemnation and a hope that spurns all bygone shame.

Away and apart from Hogg, the discovery of Hogg's unfaithfulness had two consequences of importance. Harriet Shelley rose in her husband's esteem, though she still occupied but a secondary place; and now that he could no longer expend the wealth of his idealizing imagination on one friend, he poured all its extravagant treasures around the other, his heroine of a daydream, Elizabeth Hitchener. Shelley's feeling towards her did not compete with his affection for Harriet; it moved in a different and a higher plane. Harriet was a gentle being to protect and cherish; Elizabeth Hitchener was his

"Sweet Benediction in the eternal Curse!  
 Veiled Glory of this lampless Universe!"

She was the "Spirit of Intellectual Beauty," clothed in the

\* "Prejudice" was a word used by Shelley at this time with a wide connotation.

† To Miss Hitchener: Keswick, Chesnut Hill, Thursday [probably November 14]. The same facts are related less fully in an earlier letter.

accidents of humanity, whom in one form or another he was CHAP. V.  
Aug. 1811—  
Feb. 1812. for ever to pursue, and lose and pursue again. "Oh, it is terrible!" he wrote to Miss Hitchener. "This stroke has almost withered my being. Were it not for the dear friend whose happiness I so much prize, which at some future period I may perhaps constitute—did I not live for an end, an aim, sanctified, hallowed—I *might* have slept in peace. Yet no—not quite that; I might have been a colonist in Bedlam." \* "Never shall that intercourse cease, which has been the day-dawn of my existence, the sun which has shed warmth on the cold, drear length of the anticipated prospect of life." † Friendship with Hogg seemed to be a thing of the earth, earthy; friendship with his imagined lady of light was felt to be boundless as the heavens, to partake of their eternity, and thus to be a pledge of endless existence. "I could have borne to die, to die eternally, with my once-loved friend [Hogg]. I could coolly have reasoned to the conclusions of reason; I could have unhesitatingly submitted. Earth seemed to be enough for our intercourse; on earth its bounds appeared to be stated, as the event hath dreadfully proved. But with *you*—your friendship seems to have generated a passion to which fifty such fleeting, inadequate existences as these appear to be but the drop in the bucket, too trivial for account. With you, I cannot submit to perish like the flower of the field; I cannot consent that the same shroud which shall moulder around these perishing frames shall enwrap the vital spirit which hath produced, sanctified—may I say *eternized*?—a friendship such as ours." ‡ Such a relation as this of Shelley's with Miss Hitchener is something far apart from the just and equal comradeship of noble minds, where all is real, substantial, and enduring; but if it were a folly, it was the folly of one destined to bid the horizons of the soul recede and to make wide the bounds of existence. It was—diverted to a

\* To Miss Hitchener: Keswick, Thursday [probably November 14, 1811].

† Ibid. [probably November 11, 1811].

‡ Ibid., November 23, 1811.



CHAP. V. real person—"the madness of those who are possessed by the Muses," as described by Plato—a madness which can enter only into "a delicate and virgin soul," there "awakening frenzy and inspiring lyrical numbers." By many and strange lures the gods sportively lead on their chosen ones to the realities of truth and joy and love.

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Shelley's residence at York now hastened to a close. It became clear that, for the sake of Harriet's happiness, they must live at a distance from Hogg, and Shelley, caring little at this moment whither they should bend their steps, left the choice of a place of abode to his wife and her sister. Their decision was in favour of Keswick, and Shelley acquiesced. Probably in order to avoid a scene of heated argument and expostulation, they did not inform Hogg of the time of their intended departure. One afternoon, early in November, he discovered with surprise that the lodgers in Blake Street had flown. It was a situation worthy of the "Sorrows of Werther." Shelley, with his professed superiority to passion, seemed to Hogg as cold and insensible as Goethe's Albert; Harriet had all the grace and freshness of a Lotte. What less could the forsaken Werther do than despatch letter after letter in pursuit of his friends, announcing in the first of these that he would have Harriet's forgiveness or would blow his brains out at her feet? \* "Think not," Shelley wrote in reply, "that I am otherwise than your friend; a friend to you now more fervent, more devoted than ever, for misery endears to us those whom we love. You are, you shall be, my bosom friend. You have been so but in one instance, and there you have deceived yourself. Still let us continue what we have ever been. I

\* Shelley to Miss Hitchener: Keswick, Thursday [probably November 14, 1811]. I have no doubt that Mr. Rossetti and other students of Shelley's life are right when they recognize, in the pages which Hogg prints (vol. ii. pp. 490–497) as a "Fragment of a Novel" in amplification of the "Sorrows of Werther," no passage of fiction, but a letter of expostulation actually addressed about this date by Shelley to his friend. In it Shelley comments on Hogg's threat of suicide, and admits that there may be some truth in Hogg's opinion that he (Shelley) is "cold, phlegmatic, unfeeling."

will remain unchanged; so *shall you hereafter*. Let us forget CHAP. V.  
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this affair; let us erase from the memory that ever it had being. Consider what havoc one year, the last of our lives, has made in memory. How can you say that good will not come; that we shall not again be what we were! Good and evil are in an ever-varying routine of change.\* Hogg begged earnestly to be permitted to be once more inmate of the same home with his friends; but to this Shelley resolutely refused to accede. Frequent letters went to and fro between York and Keswick for some five or six weeks. In one of these Hogg hinted the possibility of a challenge and duel, to which Shelley replied that nothing which his friend could do or say would induce him to accept a challenge—he had no right to take another's life or to expose his own. Hogg's answer was apologetic, dwelling on his quick passions, his high sense of honour. To this Shelley seems to have made no response, and from December onwards for many months intercourse between the Oxford comrades and confederates ceased; a dim estranging sea flowed in and divided the hearts and lives once pledged to an indissoluble union. "I leave him," wrote Shelley, "to his fate. Would that I could have rescued him! It is an unavailing wish—the last one that I shall breathe over departed excellence."†

Travelling through the Yorkshire Richmond, the wanderers reached Keswick in the dull November days. They obtained lodgings in the town,‡ and were soon happy in having secured, for a moderate rent, a small furnished house.§ Chesnut Cottage, which may still be seen, is a low, one-storied house, standing upon the side of the umbrageous road which runs

\* I have no hesitation in transferring these sentences to my narrative from the letter of Shelley transformed by Hogg to a "Fragment of a Novel." The date of Shelley's letter cannot be precisely ascertained.

† To Miss Hitchener: Keswick, December 26, 1811.

‡ At Mr. D. Crosthwaite's, Townhead, Keswick.

§ Two guineas and a half a week, with linen provided, says Shelley in a letter of December 26. In a letter of November 26 (as printed by Medwin) he states that the rent was only twenty shillings a week.

CHAP. V. down the south-western slope of Chesnut Hill. It looks  
 Aug. 1811— forth upon the fertile grounds which connect the lakes of  
 Feb. 1812. Derwentwater and Bassenthwaite. Both lakes are visible from the garden—a garden of old-fashioned shrubs cut in the Dutch fashion. Skiddaw, Grisdale Pike, and Hindsgarth rise above the other mountains, which form, as Coleridge described, the giant's encampment of Keswick. The murmur of the unseen river may be heard when all else is still. A few minutes' walk would bring the occupant of the Cottage into view of the whole length of Derwentwater, with Borrowdale opening up to Scawfell.

Were it not for the disturbing letters which came from Hogg, and certain troubles connected with ways and means, these days of the declining year would have been bright with inward happiness. Shelley's affection for his young wife had strengthened with his growing sense of protectiveness towards her. Eliza Westbrook was with them, and her presence added to Harriet's satisfaction in her new home. "Words," wrote the younger sister, "can never sufficiently express her goodness and kindness to me. She is my more than mother."\* To Shelley at this time his sister-in-law seemed "a woman rather superior to the generality"—prejudiced, yet with prejudices which he did not consider unvanquishable; "indeed," he adds, "I have already conquered some of them." "Eliza," he wrote some weeks later, "is a very amiable girl. Her opinions are gradually rectifying."† It was pleasant to have within arguing range a victim of intolerance who was not unwilling to be illuminated. But a far higher pleasure lay in anticipating the arrival at Chesnut Cottage, in the Christmas holidays, or at latest in the following midsummer, of one who needed no illumination, one who was herself all light and love—Elizabeth Hitchener. Even now to wander alone among the mountains, musing on Miss Hitchener and human nature, was

\* To Miss Hitchener: Keswick [January 29, 1812].

† Ibid., probably November 14, 1811, and January 2, 1812.

no mean delight. "[November 23, 1811.] I have taken a long CHAP. V.  
*solitary* ramble to-day. These gigantic mountains piled on each other, these waterfalls, these million-shaped clouds tinted by the varying colours of innumerable rainbows hanging between yourself and a lake as smooth and dark as a plain of polished jet—oh, these are sights attunable to the contemplation! . . . I have been thinking of you and of human nature. Your letter has been the partner of my solitude—or, rather, I have not been alone, for you have been with me."\* Now, far more than in the summer days among the Welsh hills and streams, did Shelley feel the power of mountain beauty; and, in truth, December is not the worst month for discovering the glory of hillside and lake and stream. Under the blue vault of a June sky there are no "goings on" in a mountain landscape. It stands bare, as Coleridge said, like a theatre at noon. Shelley gazed with wonder and delight upon the snow-crested peaks and fells, yet dared to hope that Skiddaw and Blencathara reserved their noblest gifts for the days when his friend should stand by his side to behold them. "[December, 1811.] These mountains are now capped with snow. The lake, as I see it hence, is glassy and calm. Snow-vapours, tinted by the loveliest colours of refraction, pass far below the summits of these giant rocks. The scene, even in a winter's sunset, is inexpressibly lovely. What will it be in summer? What when you are here?"†

Various literary enterprises occupied Shelley during the months at Keswick, and were pursued with so much zeal that Harriet feared lest the strain might over-tax his strength. Early in December he had in contemplation a poem designed to set forth his vision of the future golden age, presenting as in a picture "the manners, simplicity, and delights of a perfect state of society." "Will you assist me?" he asked Miss Hitchener. "I only thought of it last night. I design to

\* To Miss Hitchener: Keswick, November 23, 1811.

† Ibid., postmark December 14, 1811.

CHAP. V. accomplish it and publish. After, I shall draw a picture of  
 Aug. 1811- Heaven. I can do neither without some hints from you. The  
 Feb. 1812. latter I think you ought to *make*.\* Whether his Egeria  
 failed in her duty of inspiration, or merely the first flush of  
 imaginative ardour ebbed, Shelley quickly lost interest in his  
 project and postponed its execution. But it faded from view  
 only for a season. How, indeed, could such a conception be  
 lost by one whose spirit resembled the charioteer of his own  
 imagining, urging the forward flight of rainbow-winged steeds,  
 and leaning forth as if to drink

“With eager lips the wind of his own speed”?

Shelley's early design found a partial fulfilment in those  
 sections of “Queen Mab” which tell of the blessed life of man  
 in ages yet to come, and a nobler fulfilment in that im-  
 passionate prophecy which leads the “Prometheus” to its  
 close.

A second of the Keswick projects occupied Shelley longer,  
 and was nearly brought to a successful issue; he purposed  
 to collect and publish his shorter poems, which he valued less  
 for their literary merits than for their moral and political  
 tendency. “I think it wrong,” he said, “to publish anything  
 anonymously, and shall annex my name and a preface, in  
 which I shall lay open my intentions, as the poems are not  
 wholly useless.

“I sing, and Liberty may love the song.”†

“My volume of poetry,” he wrote a month later, “will be,  
 I fear, an inferior production; it will be only valuable to  
 philosophical and reflecting minds, who love to trace the  
 early state of human feelings and opinions—who can make  
 allowances for some bad versification.”‡ In his retirement  
 among the mountains Shelley did not find it easy to negotiate

\* To Miss Hitchener: Keswick, postmark December 14, 1811.

† Ibid., December 26, 1811.

‡ Ibid., January 26, 1812.

with printers or publishers; he prepared his manuscript, and on leaving Keswick for his mission to Ireland he took with him this sheaf of poems. The Dublin Stockdale, formerly printer of the *Press*, a celebrated organ of the United Irishmen, professed his readiness to publish the volume of verse; but he was tardy in fulfilling his engagement. When Shelley left Ireland the manuscript remained in Stockdale's hands; the publisher had grown prudent, and declined to proceed until he had received payment in advance. Shelley, indignant, sought with the aid of Irish friends to recover possession of his manuscript, and feared that Stockdale would not readily allow so valuable a possession to escape from his clutches. A volume of essays, probably on moral and political subjects, also occupied Shelley during the Keswick days. But his chief hopes and interest gathered around "Hubert Cauvin," a novel with a purpose, which had made considerable progress before the close of the year 1811. Shelley's tale was one of recent days, designed to exhibit "the state of morals and opinions in France during the latter years of its monarchy," and to set forth the causes of the failure of the French Revolution. It was not to be too obtrusively didactic, and yet it refused to flatter the vulgar appetite for romance. "Some of the leading passions of the human mind will of course have a place in its fabric. I design to exclude the sexual passion; and think the keenest satire on its intemperance will be complete silence on the subject. I have already [January 2, 1812] done about 200 pages of this work, and about 150 of the essays."\* No trace of "Hubert Cauvin" can now be found in print or in manuscript.

In his seclusion of Chesnut Cottage Shelley saw little of the general society of Keswick. Discovering everywhere corruption caused by luxury and commerce, he discovered it even in the little mountain town guarded from the great world by its giant warders and by the spiritual presences of

\* To Miss Hitchener: Keswick, January 2, 1812. .

CHAP. V. lake and stream. "Though the face of the country is lovely," he wrote, "the *people* are detestable. The manufacturers, with their contamination, have crept into the peaceful vale and deformed the loveliness of nature with human taint. The debauched servants of the great families who resort contribute to the total extinction of morality. Keswick seems more like a suburb of London than a village of Cumberland."\* The Duke of Norfolk, whose seat of Greystoke was close to Penrith, had written, we are told, to some gentlemen among his agricultural friends, "requesting them to pay such neighbourly attentions to the solitary young people as circumstances might place in their power."† But Shelley's solitude was not often invaded by these rural gentry. The tenants of Chesnut Cottage may have appeared to some of them little better than a pair of strayed children. "Was the garden let with your part of the house?" asked a member of the Southey family. "Oh no," replied Mrs. Shelley—a matron who was still almost a school-girl. "The garden is not ours; but then, you know, the people let us run about in it, whenever Percy and I are tired of sitting in the house." Harriet, we may believe, oftener ran about the garden with Percy than did the honours of her house for county magnates. The straitened means of the household did not favour a needless hospitality; and Shelley's strange ways and his absence on Sundays from church—that rendezvous of social respectabilities—were enough to suggest that his acquaintance might be one of questionable advantage. His humbler neighbours also had their own alarms and surmises. Mysterious flames had been seen about his house in the November nights—could it be that some diabolical enchantments were being enacted? "Strange prejudices have these country people!" he writes to Miss Hitchener (November 26, 1811). "I must relate one very

\* To Miss Hitchener: January 7, 1812. Southey had made a similar complaint in a letter of September 19, 1808. "An inactive clergyman, negligent magistrates, cotton mills, and lakers have ruined the morals of the place."

† De Quincey "Sketches Critical and Biographic," p. 18.

singular one. The other night I was explaining to Harriet and Eliza the nature of the atmosphere, and to illustrate my theory I made some experiments on hydrogen gas, one of its constituent parts. This was in the garden, and the vivid flame was seen at some distance. A few days after Mr. Dare entered our cottage, and said he had something to say to me. 'Why, sir,' said he, 'I am not satisfied with you. I wish you to leave my house.' 'Why, sir?' 'Because the country talks very strangely of your proceedings. Odd things have been seen at night near your dwelling. I am very ill satisfied with this. Sir, I don't like to talk of it. I wish you to provide yourself elsewhere.' I have with much difficulty quieted Mr. Dare's fears. He does not, however, much like us, and I am by no means certain that he will permit us to remain."

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Before leaving York, Shelley, acting on the advice of his cousin, Charles Grove, had written to the Duke of Norfolk, requesting his Grace to use his influence to restore friendly relations between his father and himself. "I am much obliged to you," he wrote to his cousin, "for your advice respecting Monsieur le Duc. I have availed myself of it, and expect the most salutary effects."\* "You have probably heard of my marriage"—so ran Shelley's letter to the Duke of Norfolk. "I am sorry to say that it has exasperated my father to a great degree, surely greater than is consistent with justice; for he has not only withheld the means of subsistence, which his former conduct and my habits of life taught me to expect as reasonable and proper, but he has even refused to render me any the slightest assistance. He referred me on application to a Mr. Whitton, whose answer to my letter vaguely complained of the disrespectfulness of mine to my father. These letters were calculated to make his considerations of my proceedings less severe. My situation is consequently most unpleasant. Under these circumstances I request your Grace

\* To H. C. Grove: York, October 29, 1811.



CHAP. V. to convince my father of the severity of his conduct; to persuade him that my offence is not of the heinous nature that he considers it; to induce him to allow me a sufficient income to live with tolerable comfort." \* The duke took the matter up in the kindest spirit; wrote in a guarded manner to Shelley, not wishing to raise expectations which might not be fulfilled; wrote also to Shelley's father, proposing to visit Field Place, and there confer with him "on the unhappy differences with his son." The conference with Mr. Timothy Shelley, as the duke had feared, led to no results immediately favourable. Returning to the north, his Grace learnt that the young folk had quitted York, and were now residing near Keswick. His kind offices did not cease, and he wrote, when November was in its wane, inviting Shelley, with his wife and sister-in-law, to Greystoke. The exchequer at Chesnut Cottage was now in a desperate condition, and on the eve of starting for the Castle Shelley despatched a letter on affairs of money to the elder Medwin. "We are now so poor," he wrote, "as to be actually in danger of every day being deprived of the necessaries of life. In two years you hinted that I could obtain money at legal interest. My poverty and not my will consents (as Romeo's apothecary says) when I request you to tell me the readiest method of obtaining this. I could repay the principal and interest on my coming of age, with very little detriment to my ultimate expectations. In case you see obvious methods of effecting this, I would thank you to remit me a small sum for immediate expenses; if not, on no account do so, as some

\* The letter dated York, October 28, 1811, is printed in *Notes and Queries*, November 20, 1858. It goes on to defend Mr. Medwin, senior, as follows: "I am particularly anxious to defend Mr. Medwin from any accusations of aiding and assisting me which my father may bring against him. I am convinced that a statement of plain truth on this head will remove any prejudice against Mr. M. from the mind of your Grace. That he did lend me £25 when I left Field Place is most true. But it is equally true that he was ignorant of my intentions; that he was ignorant of the purposes to which I was about to apply the money; that he expressed his regret that he had unknowingly been instrumental to my schemes; and that he declined lending me an additional sum when he was aware of them."

degree of hazard must attend all my acts under age, and I am resolved never again to expose you to suffer for my imprudence. Mr. Westbrook has sent me a small sum, with an intimation that we are to expect no more; this suffices for the immediate discharge of a few debts; and it is nearly with our very last guinea that we visit the Duke of Norfolk at Greystoke to morrow [December 1]. We return to Keswick on Wednesday [December 4]. I have very few hopes from this visit. That reception into Abraham's bosom [*i.e.* a possible reconciliation with his father] appeared to me to be the consequence of some infamous concessions which are, I suppose, synonymous with duty.\* What concessions Shelley regarded as infamous will presently appear from letters to his father.

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With empty pockets, and a heart not over full of hope, Shelley, accompanied by Harriet and Eliza, reached Greystoke. In spite of wild and bitter weather—sleet, hail, and snow—guests continued to arrive: Lady Musgrave, Mr. and Mrs. Howard de Corby, Mr. James Brougham (brother of Mr. Brougham, the Whig debater and Edinburgh reviewer), and others; and among these Eliza and Harriet seem to have borne their part with grace. The duke, declares Hogg mischievously, citing Harriet as his authority, was “quite charmed” with Miss Westbrook. From December 4 the visit extended itself probably to the 8th or 9th, and Shelley was not unfavourably impressed by his host. If only he were a man and not a duke! If only the courtiers in attendance were a little less obsequious or acquiescent! When, once more at ease in his mountain nook, he could unbosom his spirit to his republican friend and philosopher, Elizabeth Hitchener, a long sigh of relief escaped his lips. “Your letters, my dearest friend, are to me an exhaustless mine of pleasure. Fatigued with aristocratical insipidity, left alone scarce one

\* Shelley means “appeared to be *anticipated* as the consequence,” etc. The letter is given by Medwin, “Life,” vol. i. pp. 375–377. See also extracts from the Duke of Norfolk's diary given by McCarthy, “Shelley's Early Life,” pp. 119–121.

CHAP. V. moment by those senseless monopolizers of time that form the court of a duke, who would be very well as a man, how delightful to commune with the soul that is undisguised, whose importance no arts are necessary nor adequate to exalt!"\* Shelley could not be quite at ease until the Sussex schoolmistress was assured that her image had not been displaced from its shrine in his imagination by the best Musgrave or Howard of them all.

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The duke's intervention in behalf of the young exile from Field Place had certainly set Mr. Timothy Shelley and old Sir Bysshe a-thinking. Shelley's grandfather, whose cherished purpose was to hand down a great property to his descendants, had already taken measures to restrain the wild boy, who had just celebrated a runaway marriage with a coffee-house keeper's daughter, from breaking up or encumbering the family estates.† Perhaps he or Mr. Timothy Shelley had heard of the young man's intention of dividing the property, whenever he might enter into possession of it, with his sisters and the sister of his soul, Miss Hitchener. Not many days had gone by after Shelley's return from Grey-stoke, when rumours reached him through Captain Pilfold of a scheme by which he might at once pass from penury to wealth, if only he would consent to entail the estate on his eldest son, or, in default of issue, on his brother. Old Bysshe feared his grandson's wild ways, and desired at any cost to bind him from parcelling out the family property. To Shelley, with his revolutionary conception of basing life wholly upon reason, the ties of kindred and tradition seemed little better than bonds of evil custom. "I, like the God of the Jews," he wrote, "set myself up as no respecter of persons; and relationship is considered by me as bearing

\* To Miss Hitchener: Keswick, probably December 10, 1811.

† A codicil to Sir Bysshe's will, dated October 26, 1811, aims at compelling or inducing his grandson to co-operate as soon as possible in fully entailing the property, and endeavours to hinder him from encumbering it in the mean time.

that relation to reason which a band of straw does to fire." \* CHAP. V.  
 "I am led to love a being not because it stands in the physical Aug. 1811-  
 relation of blood to me, but because I discern an intellectual Feb. 1812.  
 relationship. It is because chance hath placed us in a situation most fit for rendering happiness to our relations that, if higher considerations intervene not, makes it our duty to devote ourselves to this object." † Higher considerations, as he conceived them, peremptorily forbade his accepting the bribe of £2000 a year, which Captain Pilfold declared was about to be offered for his acceptance, when this was coupled with the condition of entailing a great property, which was equivalent to a vast command over labour, on one who might be a vicious man or a fool. The anticipated proposal was in anticipation indignantly rejected. "You will before now have my last letter," Shelley wrote to Miss Hitchener (December 15, 1811). "I have felt the distrustful recurrences of the post-office which *you* felt when no answer to all your letters came. I have regretted that visit to Greystoke, because this delay must have given you uneasiness. I have since heard from Captain P[ilfold]. His letter contains the account of a meditated proposal, on the part of my father and grandfather, to make my income immediately larger than the former's, in case I will consent to entail the estate on my eldest son, and, in default of issue, on my brother. Silly dotards! do they think I can be thus bribed and ground into an act of such contemptible injustice and inutility? that I will forswear my principles in consideration of £2000 a year? that the good will I could thus purchase, or the ill will I could thus overbear, would recompense me for the loss of self-esteem, of conscious rectitude? And with what face can they make me a proposal so insultingly hateful? Dare one of them propose such a condition to my face—to the face of any virtuous man—and not sink into nothing at his disdain? That I should entail

\* To Miss Hitchener: York, postmark October 18 [1811].

† Ibid.: Keswick, probably December 10, 1811.

CHAP. V. £120,000 of command over labour, of power to remit this, to employ it for beneficent purposes, on one whom I know not—who might, instead of being the benefactor of mankind, be its bane, or use this for the worst purposes, which the real delegates of my chance-given property might convert into a most useful instrument of benevolence! No! this you will not suspect me of.” Still quivering with wrath and horror at the thought of being made the possessor of £2000 a year under a condition which he regarded as immoral, Shelley adds, “My indignant contempt has probably confused my language and rendered my writing rather illegible. But it is my custom to communicate to you, my dearest friend—to that brain of sympathetic sensibility—every idea as it arises, as I do to my own.”\*

Two days previously, Shelley, in ignorance of the meditated proposal, had written to his father, on the advice of the Duke of Norfolk, a letter which is admirable in temper, conciliating, yet firm and frank when dealing with points as to which he could make no concession.

*Shelley to Mr. Timothy Shelley.*

Keswick, Cumberland, December 13, 1811.

MY DEAR SIR,

I have lately returned from Greystoke, where I had been invited by the Duke of Norfolk, that he might speak with me of the unhappy differences which some of my actions have occasioned. The result of his advice was that I should write a letter to you, the tone of whose expression should be sorrow that I should have wounded the feelings of persons so nearly connected with me. Undoubtedly I should thus express the real sense of my mind, for when convinced of my error no one is more ready to own that

\* It must be mentioned to Miss Hitchener's honour that when Shelley wrote to her from York announcing his intention of sharing his property with his sisters and Hogg and herself, she refused to listen to such a project, as far as she was herself concerned, only yielding so far as to consent to Shelley's making some provision for the declining days of her former schoolmistress, Miss Adams, “the mother of her soul.”

conviction than myself, nor to repair any injuries which might have resulted from a line of conduct which I had pursued. CHAP. V.

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On my expulsion from Oxford you were so good as to allow me £200 per annum; you also added a promise of my being unrestrained in the exercise of the completest free agency. In consequence of this last I married a young lady whose personal character is unimpeachable. This action (admitting it to be done) in its very nature required dissimulation, much as I may regret that I had descended to employ it. My allowance was then withdrawn; I was left without money four hundred miles from one being I knew, every day liable to be exposed to the severest exile of penury. Surely something is to be allowed for human feelings, when you reflect that the letters you then received were written in this state of helplessness and dereliction. And now let me say that a reconciliation with you is a thing which I very much desire. Accept my apologies for the uneasiness which I have occasioned; believe that my wish to repair any uneasiness is firm and sincere. I regard these family differences as a very great evil, and I much lament that I should in any wise have been instrumental in exciting them.

I hope you will not consider what I am about to say an insulting want of respect or contempt; but I think it my duty to say that however great advantages might result from such concessions, I can make no promise of concealing my opinions in political or religious matters. I should consider myself culpable to excite any expectation in your mind which I should be unable to fulfil. What I have said is actuated by the sincerest wish of being again upon those terms with you which existed some time since. I have not employed hypocrisy to heighten the regret which I feel for having occasioned uneasiness. I have not employed meanness to concede what I consider it my duty to withhold. Such methods as these would be unworthy of us both. I hope you will consider what I have said, and I remain, dear father, with sincerest wishes for our perfect right understanding,

Yours respectfully and affectionately,

P. B. SHELLEY.

To this letter Mr. Timothy Shelley replied in a tone of conciliation. There was also good tidings from Harriet's father. Possibly the visit to the seat of the Duke of Norfolk,

CHAP. V. with hardly a guinea in the pockets of the three guests, had made an impression on Mr. Westbrook. It was not becoming that his daughter should pay her respects at ducal castles in a state of entire destitution; henceforth he would allow her £200 a year. Two days before Christmas Shelley again wrote to his father.

*Shelley to Mr. Timothy Shelley.*

December 23, 1811.

MY DEAR SIR,

Your letter which arrived last night gave me much pleasure; I hasten to acknowledge it, and to express my satisfaction that you should no longer regard me in an unfavourable light.

Mr. Westbrook at present allows for his daughter's subsistence £200 per annum, which prevents any situations occurring with similar unpleasantness as that at Edinburgh.

My principles still remain the same as those which caused my expulsion from Oxford. When questions which regard the subject are agitated in society I explain my opinions with coolness and moderation. You will not, I hope, object to my train of thinking. I could disguise it, but this would be falsehood and hypocrisy.

Believe that what I have said is dictated by the sincerest sentiments of respect. . . . I beg my love to my mother and sisters, and remain, with sentiments of respect,

Your affectionate son,

P. B. SHELLEY.

The writer of this letter knew how to maintain his cause with graceful decision. It was a pity that Mr. Timothy Shelley, meaning well, should mar his kindly acts by blundering words of irritation. "By-the-by," wrote Shelley a month later to Miss Hitchener, "my father has allowed me £200 per annum, attended with the compliment that he did it to *prevent my cheating strangers.*"\* Thus, although nothing more was heard of the rumoured proposal by which Shelley was to be made a wealthier man than his father, by the beginning of the year 1812 he was relieved from distress, and

\* Keswick, January 26, 1812.

the household at Chesnut Cottage could count upon an CHAP. V. income, independent of Eliza Westbrook's means, of four Aug. 1811- hundred a year. Feb. 1812.

Among the guests at Greystoke one in particular attracted Shelley's attention. "He was an elderly man," Shelley wrote, "who seemed to know all my concerns; and the expression of his face, whenever I held the arguments which I do everywhere, was such as I shall not readily forget. I shall have more to tell of him, for we have met him before in these mountains, and his particular look then struck Harriet." This noticeable man—Mr. William Calvert, who was intimate with the Duke of Norfolk, and probably through him had some acquaintance with Shelley's affairs—became the young stranger's first and firmest friend at Keswick. Mr. Calvert's character did not belie his remarkable looks. His father had been steward to the Duke of Norfolk; his brother Raisley is remembered as the benefactor whose dying generosity enabled Wordsworth to devote his genius to high, unmercenary ends;\* he himself in the summer of 1793 had been Wordsworth's companion in the Isle of Wight, and for a time Wordsworth, with his sister Dorothy, seems to have been domiciled with Calvert at the farmhouse of Windybrow, near Keswick. He was a liberal in politics, and had a lively, if amateurish, interest in experimental science not unlike that of Shelley. In 1801 Coleridge wrote to Humphrey Davy, begging on behalf of Calvert for instructions how to furnish a chemical laboratory. Calvert had built himself a new house at Windybrow, and had invited Wordsworth and his sister to live with him once again. Chemistry attracted Wordsworth as an intellectual exercise which does not exhaust the feelings—a pursuit less connected than poetry with deep passion. "However, whether Wordsworth come or no," said Coleridge, "Calvert and I have determined to begin and go on. Calvert is a man of sense,

\* The Calverts and Raisleys were members of the German colony of miners who settled at Keswick in the reign of Elizabeth.



CHAP. V. and some originality, and is besides what is well called a  
 Aug. 1811— handy man. . . . An electrical machine and a number of little  
 Feb. 1812. nicknacks connected with it Mr. Calvert has." It has been argued, not without plausibility, that Coleridge and Calvert are the two dwellers in the Castle of Indolence described in Wordsworth's well-known stanzas, and that to Calvert, not Coleridge, belong the lines which tell how

"A noticeable man, with large grey eyes,"

would entice his companion, the wan singer, to interest himself in "rare inventions"—microscope, *Æolian* harp of grass-blades, and other nicknacks of dilettante science or ingenious idleness.\* Mr. Calvert was popular in the county; a promoter of all local improvements. As an agriculturist he must have loved novel experiments, if it be true that he ran his plough over Latrigg, the furrows of which plough, it is said, may still be discerned.

It was at Mr. Calvert's house that Shelley first met Robert Southey. To dwell in the neighbourhood of a poet, whose genius had been as that of a master with his imagination, was doubtless one of the attractions to Keswick; but during some of the earlier days of Shelley's residence at Chesnut Cottage Southey was absent from home. "The scenery here is awfully beautiful," Shelley wrote on November 14, ". . . but the object most interesting to my feelings is Southey's habitation. He is now on a journey; when he returns I will call on him."† Christmas had almost come when the meeting at Calvert's house took place. The elder poet resembled the younger in the natural ardour and sensibility of his temperament, and in the fact that his youth had been haunted by visions of human perfectibility, and of a golden age of equality

\* The suggestion and argument are my own; but they have been received not unfavourably by Professor Knight. See the note in his edition of Wordsworth's *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. pp. 393-395.

† To Miss Hitchener. Southey must have returned almost immediately, for letters of his have been printed which are dated Keswick, November 16 and November 18.

and innocence and joy. But Southey, an Arab steed, had long been serving as a beast of burden; he had dutifully, cheerfully trained himself to control his excessive sensibility, and as he advanced to mature years his early hopes and visions had taken a sober colouring, so that for him the millennium seemed to be indefinitely postponed. In Shelley he fancied that he beheld the image of his own ardent youth revived from the past. "Here is a man at Keswick," he wrote, "who acts upon me as my own ghost would do. He is just what I was in 1794. His name is Shelley, son to the member for Shoreham; with £6000 a year entailed upon him, and as much more in his father's power to cut off. Beginning with romances of ghosts and murder, and with poetry at Eton, he passed, at Oxford, into metaphysics; printed half a dozen pages, which he entitled 'The Necessity of Atheism;' sent one anonymously to Copleston, in expectation, I suppose, of converting him; was expelled in consequence; married a girl of seventeen, after being turned out of doors by his father. And here they both are in lodgings, living upon £200 a year which her father allows them. He is come to the fittest physician in the world. At present he has got to the Pantheistic stage of philosophy, and in the course of a week I expect he will be a Berkeleyan, for I have put him upon a course of Berkeley. It has surprised him a good deal to meet, for the first time in his life, with a man who perfectly understands him, and does him full justice. I tell him that all the difference between us is that he is nineteen and I am thirty-seven; and I dare say it will not be very long before I shall succeed in convincing him that he may be a true philosopher, and do a great deal of good, with £6000 a year, the thought of which troubles him a great deal more at present than ever the want of sixpence (for I have known such a want) did me. . . . God help us! The world wants mending, though he did not set about it exactly in the right way." \*

\* Southey to Grosvenor C. Bedford, Esq.: Keswick, January 4, 1812. "Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey," vol. iii. pp. 325, 326.

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CHAP. V.      With characteristic kindness, Southey at once set himself to be of service to his young acquaintance ; invited him, with his wife and sister-in-law, to Greta Hall ; lent him books ; induced Shelley's landlord, Mr. Dare, to reduce the weekly rent of Chesnut Cottage from two guineas and a half to one guinea and a half ; supplied the Cottage, in order to effect this reduction, with linen from Mrs. Southey's store ; took privately such indirect means as were in his power of assuring Shelley's father that, erroneous as his son's conduct might have been, his heart would bring him right, and that everything might be hoped from his genius and his virtues. Differences of opinion, which quickly discovered themselves, did not alienate the elder from the younger man. He recognized Shelley's generosity of temper, and made allowances for the illusions of an intellect eager for truth, but immature and imperfectly trained. Shelley responded to this kindness ; told Southey, as we have seen, the story of his life, and communicated to him, with vivid interest, all his thoughts concerning things past, present, and to come. " I have delayed writing for two days," he informed Miss Hitchener (December 26, 1811), " that my letters might not succeed each other so closely as one day. I have also been much engaged in talking with Southey. You may conjecture that a man must possess high and estimable qualities if, with the prejudices of such total differences from my sentiments, I can regard him great and worthy. In fact, Southey is an advocate of liberty and equality. He looks forward to a state when all shall be perfected, and matter become subjected to the omnipotence of mind. But he is now an advocate for existing establishments. He says he designs his three statues in 'Kehama' to be contemplated with republican feelings, but not in this age. Southey hates the Irish ; he speaks against Catholic Emancipation and Parliamentary reform. In all these things we differ, and our differences were the subject of a long conversation. Southey calls himself a Christian ; but he does not believe that the

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Evangelists were inspired; he rejects the Trinity, and thinks that Jesus Christ stood precisely in the same relation to God as himself. Yet he calls himself a Christian. Now, if ever there was a definition of a Deist, I think it could never be clearer than this confession of faith.\* But Southey, though far from being a man of great reasoning powers, is a great man. He has all that characterizes the poet; great eloquence, though obstinacy in opinion, which arguments are the last things that can shake. He is a man of virtue. He will never belie what he thinks; his professions are in compatibility with his practice. More of him another time."

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It is highly probable that Southey, who was no metaphysician, may have found himself unable to meet offhand the arguments of one possessed of considerable dialectical skill, and fresh from authors who took the negative side in the theistic controversy. He referred the young disputant to books; reminded him, as an elder and wiser man, of his unripe years, and in the end caused him some displeasure by declining to discuss points which, he declared, are beyond the reach of the human intellect. Southey hoped that Bishop Berkeley might supply what he himself lacked in metaphysical acumen, and might carry Shelley forward irresistibly to a theistic idealism. A copy of Berkeley was procured from Lloyd, the friend of Coleridge and of Lamb. What most deeply impressed Shelley in the volume was not Berkeley's chain of reasoning, but a comment pencilled by Charles Lloyd in the margin—a comment which leads one to surmise that Lloyd had not penetrated far into the thoughts of Berkeley: "Mind cannot create, it can only perceive." †

\* This account of Southey's theology would seem to agree better with his opinions of earlier years than with those of 1811-12; but one cannot easily fix the precise date of his change of belief. His contributions to the *Edinburgh Annual Register*, 1812, show that he was a firm supporter of the Church of England.

† Shelley writes to Leigh Hunt, September 27, 1819: "One [of Lloyd's notes] especially struck me as being the assertion of a doctrine of which even then I had long been persuaded, and on which I had founded much of my persuasions, as regarded the imagined cause of the universe: 'Mind cannot create, it can only perceive.'"

CHAP. V. "I have read Berkeley," Shelley wrote from Lynmouth, some months later, "and the perusal of his arguments tended more than anything to convince me that immaterialism and other words of general usage, deriving all their force from predicates in *non*, were invented by the pride of philosophers to conceal their ignorance, even from themselves."\* It was just at the moment when Southey was putting his argumentative young friend "upon a course of Berkeley" that Shelley wrote thus to Miss Hitchener: "I have lately had some conversation with Southey which has elicited my true opinions of God. He says I ought not to call myself an atheist, since in reality I believe that the universe is God. I tell him I believe that 'God' is another signification for 'the universe.' I then explain:—I think reason and analogy seem to countenance the opinion that life is infinite; that, as the soul which now animates this frame was once the vivifying principle of the infinitely lowest link in the chain of existence, so it is ultimately destined to attain to the highest; that everything is animation (as explained in my last letter), and in consequence, being infinite, we can never arrive at its termination. How, on this hypothesis, are we to arrive at a First Cause? Southey admits and believes this. Can he be a Christian? Can God be three? Southey agrees in my idea of Deity—the mass of infinite intelligence. I, you, and he are constituent parts of the immeasurable whole."

To be the object of a young idealist's enthusiasm is not a piece of unmingled good fortune for man or woman. Shelley's early idols were all sooner or later dethroned, and, ceasing to be divinities, did not always obtain from him their just rights as human beings. So it had been with Hogg; so it was to be with Elizabeth Hitchener; so to some extent it was now with Southey. Shelley's loyalty was constantly given to his own ideals; but he had a certain infirmity of vision. The figures of men and women, standing out from a luminous background,

\* To Godwin, July 29, 1812.

seemed to him to be surrounded with a nimbus of glory. He advanced; the splendour receded to the horizon's bound, and his divinity stood on the common earth, shorn of the aureole. It needed but a few days to discover that Southey was an erring mortal, of stature not wholly heroic. "[January 7, 1812.] Southey says expediency ought to [be] made the ground of politics, but not of morals. I urged that the most fatal error that ever happened in the world was the separation of political and ethical science; that the former ought to be entirely regulated by the latter, as whatever was a right criterion of action for an individual must be so for a society, which was but an assemblage of individuals; 'that politics were morals comprehensively enforced.' Southey did not think the reasoning conclusive. He has a very happy knack, when truth goes against him, of saying, 'Ah! when you are as old as I am you will think with me.' This talent he employed in the above instance. If a thing exists, there can always be shown reasons for its existence. If there cannot, it still *may* exist, but can never be the subject of mortal faith.

"You will see in my 'Hubert Cauvin' (the name of the tale) that I have spoken of expediency, insincerity, mystery—adherence to which I do not consider the remotest occasion to violence and blood in the French Revolution. Indeed, their fatal effects are to be traced in every one instance of human life where vice and misery enter into the features of the portraiture.

"I do not think so highly of Southey as I did. It is to be confessed that to see him in his family, to behold him in his domestic circle, he appears in a most amiable light. I do not mean that he is or can be the great character which once I linked him to; his mind is terribly narrow compared to it. *Once* he was this character,—everything you can conceive of practised virtue. Now he is corrupted by the world, contaminated by custom: it rends my heart when I think what he might have been!"

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CHAP. V. If Southey could not remain on the heights of admiration,  
 Aug. 1811— it was inevitable that his descent must be extreme and swift.  
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Another influence than that of Southey, and a far different one, which had long been dominant with Shelley's intellect, was now to clothe itself in humanity, and to utter itself not merely with the voice of abstract reason, but with a personal force and living authority. We do not find it difficult at the present time to point out fallacies and inconsequence in the revolutionary theory and argument of William Godwin; but to many minds at the close of the last and the opening of the present century his "Political Justice" seemed to sum up the truths of the great intellectual and political movement in France, divested of all that was temporary or accidental, and all that might cause violence and terror. "Throw away your books of chemistry," said Wordsworth to a young man, a student of the Temple, "and read Godwin on Necessity." \* The philosophy of Godwin was as if expressly framed to impose itself with authority on the intellect of a youth of ardent temperament and aspiring moral views; it seemed to be at once victory and law; it promised to quell all dissonance of passion, and inspire a regulated enthusiasm of virtue, reason, benevolence; it knew not fear nor favour; it scorned the limitations of concrete fact; its conclusions were sanguine as the hopes of a lover, yet exact as the calculations of a sage. "Godwin," said Hazlitt, "conceived too nobly of his fellows . . . he raised the standard of morality above the reach of humanity, and, by directing virtue to the most airy and romantic heights, made her path dangerous, solitary, impracticable. . . . The disciple of the 'New School' is to be always the hero of duty; the law to which he has bound himself never swerves nor relaxes; his feeling of what is right is to be at all times wrought up to a pitch of enthusiastic self-devotion; he must become the unshrinking martyr and confessor of the public good. . . . Every man (it was proposed—'so ran the tenor of the bond') was to be a

\* Hazlitt, "The Spirit of the Age," p. 33.

Regulus, a Codrus, a Cato, or a Brutus—every woman a mother CHAP. V.  
of the Gracchi.” Every human being, as Hazlitt puts it, was Aug. 1811–  
to be screwed up by mood and figure into a logical machine— Feb. 1812.  
a machine, yet also a moral hero, so framed as to forward the  
public good with the utmost punctuality and effect. In  
“Political Justice” Shelley had found a doctrine and a rule of  
life, into harmony with which he had brought his opinions and  
conduct in ardent discipleship. If ever he subjected the bonds  
of kindred and of filial duty to the criticism of reason, he was  
only acting out the principles of his master; if he spoke of  
vicious inclination as “prejudice,” or a criminal as one labouring  
under a mistake, it was because he had learnt from Godwin  
that all vice is error; if he resolved to divide his inheritance  
with strangers or friends in the common faith of equality and  
freedom, he could justify the resolve by proving from “Political  
Justice” that property belongs of right to those who can best  
use it for the public good.\*

Godwin’s great treatise had been published while his future  
disciple was a babe in arms. In 1812 his influence was largely  
spent; he had already entered into “the twilight of a doubtful  
immortality.” To Shelley he was a spiritual presence, a great  
legislator of the past, whose mind still moved over the turbulent  
waters of society to evolve order from their chaos. While at  
Keswick Shelley learnt, towards the close of December, 1811,  
that the great lawgiver and prophet even now trod this  
earth. He was profoundly moved by the discovery. Hardly  
daring to hope for an answer, he hastened to despatch a letter  
to the shrine of truth and virtue—it seemed no less to him—at  
Skinner Street, London, laying bare his soul before the eyes  
of William Godwin, and craving a blessing—such a blessing  
as philosophers may bestow—at his hands. “The name of  
Godwin,” thus ran his letter (January 3, 1812), “has been

\* On Godwin, beside Mr. Kegan Paul’s biography, see Mr. Leslie Stephen’s  
article in the *Fortnightly Review*, October 1, 1876; and his article, “Godwin  
and Shelley,” in the *Cornhill Magazine*, March, 1879.



CHAP. V. used to excite in me feelings of reverence and admiration.  
Aug. 1811- I have been accustomed to consider him a luminary too  
Feb. 1812, dazzling for the darkness which surrounds him. From the earliest period of my knowledge of his principles, I have ardently desired to share on the footing of intimacy that intellect which I have delighted to contemplate in its emanations. Considering, then, these feelings, you will not be surprised at the inconceivable emotions with which I learnt your existence and your dwelling. I had enrolled your name in the list of the honourable dead. I had felt regret that the glory of your being had passed from this earth of ours. It is not so. You still live, and I firmly believe are still planning the welfare of human kind. I have but just entered on the scene of human operations, yet my feelings and my reasonings correspond with what yours were. My course has been short but eventful. I have seen much of human prejudice, suffered much from human persecution, yet I see no reason hence inferable which should alter my wishes for their renovation. The ill treatment I have met with has more than ever impressed the truth of my principles on my judgment. I am young: I am ardent in the cause of philanthropy and truth. Do not suppose that this is vanity. I am not conscious that it influences this portraiture. I imagine myself dispassionately describing the state of my mind. I am young: you have gone before me, I doubt not are a veteran to me in the years of persecution. Is it strange that, defying prejudice as I have done, I should outstep the limits of custom's prescription, and endeavour to make my desire useful by a friendship with William Godwin? I pray you to answer this letter. Imperfect as may be my capacity, my desire is ardent and unintermitted. Half an hour would be at least humanely employed in the experiment. I may mistake your residence. Certain feelings, of which I may be an inadequate arbiter, may induce you to desire concealment. I may not, in fine, have an answer to this letter. If I do not, when I come to London I shall seek for you. I am convinced I could

represent myself to you in such terms as not to be thought CHAP. V.  
 wholly unworthy of your friendship. At least, if desire for Aug. 1811-  
 universal happiness has any claim upon your preference, that Feb. 1812.  
 desire I can exhibit. Adieu. I shall earnestly await your  
 answer." \*

Godwin did not now learn for the first time that young men were drawn to him in enthusiastic reverence, but perhaps he had not already enjoyed the posthumous honours of apotheosis. It was in accordance with the principles of reason that he should be an object of fervid admiration; he was therefore favourably disposed toward this new candidate for his friendship; still it was desirable to know some particulars which should transform the voice from Keswick—an echo of his own voice in "Political Justice" reverberating from the mountains of the north—into a being of flesh and blood, with a local habitation and a history. He immediately replied to Shelley's letter, confessing that his unknown correspondent was for the present a figure in the vague, an abstraction of ardent youthfulness rather than an actual man. Shelley's second letter, which reviews his past life, is of much biographical interest, but we must bear in mind that the writer, who had only a faint interest in the history of nations, was one of those men for whom the hard outline of facts in their own individual history has little fixity; whose footsteps are for ever followed and overflowed by the wave of oblivion; who remember with extraordinary tenacity the sentiment of times and of places, but lose the framework of circumstance in which the sentiment was set; and who, in reconstructing an image of the past, often unconsciously supply links and lines upon the suggestion of that sentiment or emotion which is for them the essential reality. There are not a few persons who from their own experience can vouch for the existence of such transforming powers of recollection; their lives have been for them

\* This letter was printed in Hogg's "Life of Shelley," and in Mr. Kegan Paul's "Life of Godwin," vol. ii.

CHAP. V. a train of emotions and ideas rather than of events, and  
 Aug. 1811- in recalling foregone events an involuntary artistic instinct  
 Feb. 1812. is at work, unconsciously adapting circumstance to feelings  
 by the aid of a winnowing wind of desire astir amid the  
 mobile cloudland of the past.

*Shelley to Godwin.\**

Keswick, January 10, 1812.

SIR,

It is not otherwise to be supposed than that I should appreciate your avocations far beyond the pleasure or benefit which can accrue to me from their sacrifice. The time, however, will be small which may be mis-spent in reading this letter; and much individual pleasure as an answer might give me, I have not the vanity to imagine that it will be greater than the happiness elsewhere diffused during the time which its creation will occupy.

You complain that the generalising character of my letter renders it deficient in interest; that I am not an individual to you. Yet intimate as I am with your character and your writings, intimacy with *yourself* must in some degree precede this exposure of my peculiarities. It is scarcely possible, however pure be the morality which he has endeavoured to diffuse, but that generalisation must characterise the uninvited address of a stranger to a stranger.

I proceed to remedy the fault. I am the son of a man of fortune in Sussex. The habits of thinking of my father and myself never coincided. Passive obedience was inculcated and enforced in my childhood. I was required to love, because it was *my duty* to love: it is scarcely necessary to remark that coercion obviated its own intention. I was haunted with a passion for the wildest and most extravagant romances. Ancient books of chemistry and magic were perused with an enthusiasm of wonder, almost amounting to belief. My sentiments were unrestrained by anything within me; external impediments were numerous, and strongly applied; their effect was merely temporary.

From a reader I became a writer of romances; before the age of seventeen I had published two, "St. Irvyne" and "Zastrozzi," each of which, though quite uncharacteristic of me as now I am,

\* Where the text differs from that given by Hogg, the reader may accept the present as the true text.

yet serves to mark the state of my mind at the period of their composition. I shall desire them to be sent to you: do not, however, consider this as any obligation to yourself to misapply your valuable time.\*

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It is now a period of more than two years since first I saw your inestimable book of "Political Justice;" it opened to my mind fresh and more extensive views; it materially influenced my character, and I rose from its perusal a wiser and a better man. I was no longer the votary of romance; till then I had existed in an ideal world—now I found that in this universe of ours was enough to excite the interest of the heart, enough to employ the discussions of reason. I beheld, in short, that I had duties to perform. Conceive the effect which the "Political Justice" would have upon a mind before jealous of its independence, and participating somewhat singularly in a peculiar susceptibility.

My age is now *nineteen*; at the period to which I allude I was at Eton. No sooner had I formed the principles which I now profess than I was anxious to disseminate their benefits. This was done without the slightest caution. I was twice expelled, but recalled by the interference of my father. I went to Oxford. Oxonian society was insipid to me, uncongenial with my habits of thinking. I could not descend to common life: the sublime interest of poetry, lofty and exalted achievements, the proselytism of the world, the equalization of its inhabitants, were to me the soul of my soul. You can probably form some idea of the contrast exhibited to my character by those with whom I was surrounded. Classical reading and poetical writing employed me during my residence at Oxford.

In the mean time I became, in the popular sense of the word "God," an atheist. I printed a pamphlet avowing my opinion and its occasion. I distributed this anonymously to men of thought and learning, wishing that Reason should decide on the case at issue: it was never my intention to deny it. Mr. Copleston at Oxford, among others, had the pamphlet; he showed it to the Master and the Fellows of University College, and I was sent for. I was informed that in case I denied the publication, no more would be said. I refused, and was expelled.

\* Shelley's statement that he had *published* "St. Irvyne" and "Zastrozzi" before he was seventeen is untrue. He seems to wish to prove that they belong to a period of boyhood before the great event of his becoming a student of "Political Justice."

CHAP. V. It will be necessary, in order to elucidate this part of my history, to inform you that I am heir by entail to an estate of £6000 per annum. My principles have induced me to regard the law of primogeniture an evil of primary magnitude. My father's notions of family honour are incoincident with my knowledge of public good. I will never sacrifice the latter to any consideration. My father has ever regarded me as a blot, a defilement of his honour. He wished to induce me by poverty to accept of some commission in a distant regiment, and in the interim of my absence to prosecute the pamphlet, that a process of outlawry might make the estate, on his death, devolve to my younger brother. These are the leading points of the history of the man before you. Others exist, but I have thought proper to make some selection, not that it is my design to conceal or extenuate any part, but that I should by their enumeration quite outstep the bounds of modesty. Now it is for you to judge whether, by permitting me to cultivate your friendship, you are exhibiting yourself more really useful than by the pursuance of those avocations, of which the time spent in allowing this cultivation would deprive you. I am now earnestly pursuing studious habits. I am writing "An inquiry into the causes of the failure of the French Revolution to benefit mankind." My plan is that of resolving to lose no opportunity to disseminate truth and happiness.

I am married to a woman whose views are similar to my own. To you, as the regulator and former of my mind, I must ever look with real respect and veneration.

Yours sincerely,  
P. B. SHELLEY.

To this letter Godwin replied promptly, expressing a deep and earnest interest in Shelley's welfare, warning him against indulging anger towards his father, and endeavouring to repress his youthful enthusiasm for the reform of the world until wisdom and knowledge should have qualified him to become a teacher. Shelley felt a happy pride in submission to his philosophic master, yet he retained the conviction that he had ascertained truths which the world needed to understand, and that it could not be doing ill if he were to become the organ or mouthpiece of these truths.

*Shelley to Godwin.*

CHAP. V.

Keswick, January 16, 1812.

Aug. 1811—  
Feb. 1812.

MY DEAR SIR,

That so prompt and so kind an answer should have relieved my mind I had scarcely dared to hope; to find that he—who as an author had gained my love and confidence, whose views and habits I had delighted to conjecture from his works, whose principles I had adopted, and every trace of whose existence is now made sacred, and I hope eternally so, by associations, which throw the charm of feeling over the deductions of reason—that he, as a man, should be my friend and my adviser, the moderator of my enthusiasm, the personal exciter and strengthener of my virtuous habits: all this was more than I dared to trust myself to hope, and which now comes to me almost like a ray of second existence.

Without the deceit of self-flattery, which might lead me to think that my intellectual powers demanded your time, those circumstances, which arbitrarily—or, as may be said, fortuitously—place me in a situation capable hereafter of considerably influencing the actions of others, induce me to think that I shall not “in publica commoda peccem, si longo sermone morer tua tempora.”

I know not how to describe the pleasure which your last letter has given me; that William Godwin should have “a deep and earnest interest in *my* welfare,” cannot but produce the most intoxicating sensations. It may be my vanity which is thus flattered, but I am much deceived in myself, if love and respect for the great and worthy form not a very considerable part of my feelings.

I cannot help considering you as a friend and adviser, whom I have known very long; this circumstance must generate a degree of familiarity, which will cease to appear surprising to you, when the intimacy which I had acquired with your writings so much preceded the information which led to my first letter. It may be said that I have derived little benefit or injury from artificial education. I have known no tutor or adviser (*not excepting my father*) from whose lessons and suggestions I have not recoiled with disgust.

The knowledge which I have, whatever it may be (putting out of the question the age of the grammar and the horn-book) has been acquired by my unassisted efforts. I have before given you a slight sketch of my earlier habits and feelings—my present are,

CHAP. V. in my own opinion, infinitely superior—they are elevated and dis-  
 Aug. 1811—interested: such as they are, you have principally produced them.  
 Feb. 1812.

With what delight, what cheerfulness, what good will, may it be conceived that I constitute myself the pupil of him, under whose actual guidance my very thoughts have hitherto been arranged.

You mistake me if you think that I am angry with my father. I have ever been desirous of a reconciliation with him, but the price which he demands for it is a renunciation of my opinions, or, at least, a subjection to conditions which should bind me to act in opposition to their very spirit. It is probable that my father has *acted* for my welfare, but the manner in which he has done so will not allow me to suppose that he has *felt* for it unconnectedly with certain considerations of birth; and feeling for these things was not feeling for me. I never loved my father—it was not from hardness of heart, for I have loved and do love warmly.

You say, “Being yet a scholar, I ought to have no intolerable itch to become a teacher.” I have not so far as any publications of mine are irreconcilable with the general good, or so far as they are negative. I do not set up for a judge of controversies, but into whatever company I go I have introduced my own sentiments, partly with a view, if they were any wise erroneous, that unforeseen elucidations might rectify them; or, if they were not, that I should contribute my mite to the treasury of wisdom and happiness. I hope in the course of our communication to acquire that sobriety of spirit which is the characteristic of true heroism. I have not heard without benefit that Newton was a modest man: I am not ignorant that vanity and folly delight in forwardness and assumption. But I think there is a line to be drawn between affectation of unpossessed talents and the deceit of self-distrust, by which much power has been lost to the world; for

“Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,  
 And waste its sweetness on the desert air.”

This line may be called “the modesty of nature.” I hope I am somewhat anxious not to outstep its boundaries. I will not again crudely obtrude the question of atheism on the world. But could I not at the same time improve my own powers and diffuse true and virtuous principles? Many with equally confined talents to my own are by publications scattering the seeds of prejudice and selfishness. Might not an exhibition of truth, with equal elegance

and depth, suffice to counteract the deleterious tendency of their principles? Does not writing hold the next place to colloquial discussion in eliciting and classing the powers of the mind? I am willing to become a scholar—nay, a pupil. My humility and confidence, where I am conscious that I am not imposed upon, and where I perceive talents and powers so certainly and undoubtedly superior, is unfeigned and complete. I have desired the publications of my early youth to be sent to you. You will perceive that “Zastrozzi” and “St. Irvyne” were written prior to my acquaintance with your writings; the “Essay on Love,” a little poem, since. I had, indeed, read “St. Leon” before I wrote “St. Irvyne;” but the reasonings had *then* made little impression.

In a few days we set off to Dublin. I do not know exactly where we shall be; but a letter addressed to Keswick will find me. Our journey has been settled some time. We go principally to *forward as much as we can* the Catholic Emancipation.

Southey the poet, whose principles were pure and elevated once, is now the paid champion of every abuse and absurdity. I have had much conversation with him. He says, “You will think as I do when you are as old.” I do not feel the least disposition to be Mr. S.’s proselyte.

In the summer we shall be in the north of Wales. Dare I hope that you will come to see us? Perhaps this is an unfeasible neglect of your avocations. I shall hope it until you forbid me.

I remain, with the greatest respect,

Your most sincere and devoted

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

The period of Shelley’s residence at Keswick was now nearly at an end. It had been on the whole a season of happiness—of growing affection for Harriet; of delight in mountain and vale and lake; of eager study and aspirant authorship; of eager hopes for the improvement of society; of delighted communion with his friend at Hurstpierpoint; and the acquaintance formed now for the first time with eminent men—Godwin and Southey—made these months an epoch in Shelley’s life. Coleridge, who not long since had been a guest of Wordsworth’s, was absent in London, toiling wearily amid the quicksands of his own infirmities. Wordsworth,



CHAP. V. residing for a time in the Grasmere parsonage—a place of  
 Aug. 1811—abode darkened in his recollection by the deaths of a son and  
 Feb. 1812. daughter—had entered on a sterile season in his life poetical.  
 If Shelley had happened to meet the elder poet his enthusiasm  
 might have been chilled, and he would probably have discovered  
 that on the subject of Catholic Emancipation—then a theme of his hopes  
 and fears—Wordsworth was as far from agreeing with him as was  
 Southey.\* In his rose-covered cottage at Town-end, Grasmere,  
 De Quincey was deep in “the wickedest of German speculations;”  
 deep also, on Saturday nights, in that drug, divine and demoniac,  
 which inspired and informed his dreams. In him alone Shelley  
 would have found an intellect as inquisitive and a dialectical skill  
 as dexterous as his own. Nor could he have viewed De Quincey’s  
 decanter of laudanum without a curious interest or perhaps a thrill  
 of alarm; for Shelley himself during his stay at Keswick had  
 made acquaintance with opium “very unwillingly and reluctantly,”  
 he declares, while suffering from a nervous attack.† But the  
 brother Oxonians, separated only by some miles of hillside and  
 valley, never met.

Shelley’s days at Chesnut Cottage were diversified by few  
 incidents beyond those which belong to the life of thought and  
 imagination. Yet they were not wholly without external events.  
 We hear of a water-excursion with some attendant adventures  
 playfully described by Harriet to Miss Hitchener,

\* In a letter (December 15, 1811) to Miss Hitchener Shelley writes, “Wordsworth, a quondam associate of Southey, yet retains the integrity of his independence,” which statement is followed by an absurd description of the beggary in which Wordsworth lived: “his poverty is such that he is frequently obliged to beg for a shirt to his back.” In a later letter (January 2, 1812) Shelley transcribes for Miss Hitchener several stanzas of Wordsworth’s “Poet’s Epitaph.” “How expressively keen are the first stanzas!” Shelley writes. “I shall see this man soon.”

† “I have been obliged, by an accession of nervous attack, to take a quantity of laudanum, which I did very unwillingly and reluctantly, and which I should not have done had I been alone. I am now quite recovered.” (Shelley to Miss Hitchener, postmark January 20, 1812). On January 29 he writes to Miss Hitchener, “I hope to be compelled to [have] recourse to laudanum no more.”

but which was not free from peril; it comes to us like the CHAP. V. first sounding of a presageful note of doom, repeated more than once before the final calamity.\* Not many days before Shelley's departure from Chesnut Cottage occurred another disturbing incident, which bears some resemblance to a strange event, afterwards to be recorded, that brought to a close his subsequent residence at Tanyrallt. The winter of 1811-12 was a time when marauders had multiplied in consequence of commercial distress, lack of employment, and the disturbed state of the country. During the dark nights of January several attempts at robbery had been made in or near Keswick. About seven o'clock on the night of Sunday, January 19, Shelley, alarmed by an unusual noise, went to the door of his cottage, opened it, and instantly received a blow which struck him to the ground, where he remained for a time senseless. Mr. Dare, his landlord, who was at hand, hearing the disturbance, rushed into the house, and the assailants, perceiving that he was armed, fled immediately.† Such is the account given by the local newspaper, and supported by statements of Shelley and Harriet. But certain residents at Keswick were sceptical respecting the reality of the supposed robber, and spoke of the affair, apparently with no sufficient reason, as a dream or hallucination of Shelley's brain.

For some time past Shelley's thoughts and hopes had tended towards Ireland. There, more than elsewhere, was being fought out, as he conceived, the struggle for political independence and religious liberty. With his desire to translate his ideas at once into action, and his passion for reforming

\* Miss Hitchener to Harriet Shelley, December 17, 1811.

† Both Harriet and Shelley speak of this attack in letters to Miss Hitchener. I follow the account in the *Cumberland Pacquet*, January 28, 1811, from which I have obtained the required extract by the kind assistance of the Rev. J. N. Hoare, and Mr. Henry Hunter, of Whitehaven. Mr. Calvert's daughter, Mrs. Stanger, states that residents in Keswick supposed that Shelley was labouring under an illusion as to the attack. He had been suffering from "nervous complaints," and had taken a quantity of laudanum; but it must be noted that in a letter written shortly before the date of the assault he tells Miss Hitchener that he is now "quite recovered."

CHAP. V. the world, Shelley longed to be a banner-bearer where the strife

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was thickest and the cries of battle were most clearly uttered. "Oh, my dearest friend," he exclaimed to Miss Hitchener (January 29, 1812), "when I think of the uncertainty and transitoriness of human life and its occupations, when I consider its fleeting prospects and its fluctuating principles, how desirous am I to crowd into its sphere as much usefulness as possible! We have but a certain time allotted to us in which to do its business; how much does it become us to improve and multiply this time, and to regard every hour neglected, mis-spent, or unimproved as so much lost to the cause of virtue, liberty, and happiness!" When first Shelley came to reside at Keswick he had not received his call as missionary on behalf of virtue and benevolence to the Irish people; he looked forward to settling before long in some picturesque, retired corner of his native county—somewhere, perhaps, in St. Leonard's Forest.\* But Harriet was much pleased with Keswick, and for a time there was a charm in Southey's conversation. Ireland was thought of as a remote rather than an immediate field of action; there was a long summer in prospect which should be enjoyed at the Lakes, with all its delights enhanced to rapture by the presence of Elizabeth Hitchener. Invigorated and inspired to high achievement by close communion with that great spirit, veiled in the form of woman, Shelley might visit Ireland in the autumn, and illuminate the unhappy land by a beam of the light of Godwin's philosophy. When, however, January arrived, Keswick was fast losing its attraction. Shelley was daily obtaining clearer evidence that Southey was a hireling who had prostituted his talents in the service of tyranny, and that the people of Keswick generally were detestable. It was decided that a party, consisting of Percy, Harriet, and Eliza Westbrook, should start for Dublin early in February. There would be no want of funds, for Captain Pilfold was sending fifty pounds, and the

\* Letter to Medwin: Medwin's "Life of Shelley," vol. i. p. 374.

Duke of Norfolk would perhaps lend a hundred ; besides, money was to be made in Ireland by the publication of Shelley's poems and moral essays—money which should all be squeezed out of the rich. “The poor cannot understand, and would not buy my poems ; therefore I shall print them expensively. My metaphysics will be also printed expensively—the first edition, that is (I am vain enough to hope for a second).” \* One thing alone was wanting to complete the happiness of the little party—the addition of Miss Hitchener to its number. Why should she not join them at once ? “If two hearts, panting for the happiness and liberty of mankind, were joined by union and proximity, as they are by friendship and sympathy, what might we not expect ! Certainly a more extended proselytism than either separately can effectuate. How Harriet and her sister long to see you ! and how *I* long to see you, never to part with you again ! How I could tell to you a thousand feelings and thoughts to which letters are inadequate ! how plans that now die away unformed might then be elicited and modified ! We might write and talk and hypothesize, theorize, and reason ! Oh, let the time come !” The glow imparted to Shelley's social and political sympathies by the near prospect of his efforts in Ireland extended itself to his friendship for Miss Hitchener, and the actual person enveloped by the luminous cloud of his enthusiasm was magnified to the stature of the Cythna or the Asia of his poems. “I look up to you,” he writes, “as a mighty mind. I anticipate the era of reform with the more eagerness as I picture to myself *you* the barrier between violence and renovation.” † “The union of our minds will be much more efficacious than a state of separate endeavour. I shall excite you to action, you will excite me to just speculation. . . . I should possibly gain the advantage in the exchange of qualities ; but *my* powers are such as would augment yours.

\* To Miss Hitchener, postmark January 20, 1812. “Hubert Cauvin” the novel, Shelley says, was to be printed cheap. Beside Captain Pilfold's £50, Shelley received a half-year's allowance (£100) before starting.

† January 2, 1812.

CHAP. V. I perceive in you the embryo of a mighty intellect which may  
Aug. 1811- one day enlighten thousands. How desirous ought I not to  
Feb. 1812. be, if I conceive that the one spark which glimmers through  
mine should kindle a blaze by which nations may rejoice! . . .  
Come, come,—and share with us the noblest success or the  
most glorious martyrdom.”\* Harriet joined her entreaties to  
the more impassioned appeal of her husband. “Why are we  
separated?” she wrote. “Should we not be more useful all  
together? You would by your arguments countenance ours.  
As you are older than I am, therefore people would not think  
what I say so foolish.” But Miss Hitchener was not to be moved;  
her duty to some young American pupils, little “nurslings  
of liberty,” kept her from an adventure across the Channel;  
and it was not without tremors that she thought of Shelley  
a central figure amid Government spies and Irish assassins,  
perhaps facing from the dock a hostile judge or languishing  
alone in a felon’s cell. The meeting with Miss Hitchener,  
though impossible at present, was, however, only postponed.  
A paradise was to be opened when May arrived, in the wild  
of North Wales. Thither might come Miss Hitchener and her  
pupils, with Mrs. Adams, the “mother of her soul;” thither  
also the venerable Godwin. “We shall then meet in Wales.  
I shall try to domesticate in some antique feudal castle, whose  
mouldering turrets are fit emblems of decaying inequality and  
oppression, whilst the ivy shall wave its green banners above  
like liberty, and flourish upon the edifice that essayed to crush  
its root. As to the ghosts, I shall welcome them, though  
Harriet protests against my invoking them. But they would  
tell tales of times of old; and it would add to the picturesque-  
ness of the scenery to see their thin forms flitting through the  
vaulted charnel. Perhaps the captain will come, and my  
aunt and the little things; perhaps you will bring the dear  
little Americans, and my mother, Mrs. Adams. Perhaps  
Godwin will come; I shall try to induce him. These castles

\* January 29, 1812.

are somewhat aërial at present; but I hope it is not a crime CHAP. V.  
 in this mortal life to solace ourselves with hopes. Mine are Aug. 1811-  
 always rather visionary. In the basis of this scheme, however, Feb. 1812.  
 —if you and I live—we will not be disappointed.” \*

The last week in Cumberland was spent with the Calverts at Greta Bank, a residence within a short distance of Keswick, on the Penrith road. Mr. Calvert strenuously opposed the Irish project; Southey also expressed his regret on hearing of the intended departure of his young friends. From Godwin came a letter of advice and warning, accompanied by an introduction to J. Philpot Curran, now Master of the Rolls in Ireland, the sincerest friend that Godwin ever had.† Shelley’s philosophic Mentor had informed his pupil that he felt in a measure responsible for his conduct, and was interested in him as a young man possessing extraordinary powers, and as one whose family and fortune gave him the means of being “extremely useful to his species.”‡ Godwin’s letters, said Shelley to Miss Hitchener, “are like his writings—the mirror of a firm and elevated mind. They are the result of the experience of ages, which he condenses for my instruction. It is with awe and veneration that I read the letters of this veteran in persecution and independence. He remains unchanged. I have no soul-chilling alteration to record of his character; the unmoderated enthusiasm of humanity still characterises him.” A few days before leaving Keswick Shelley wrote to assure Godwin that he was no firebrand about to kindle strife in Ireland, and that as to his father he harboured no feelings of resentment or hostility.

*Shelley to Godwin.*

Keswick, Cumberland, January 28, 1812.

MY DEAR SIR,

Your letter has reached me on the eve of our departure for Dublin. I cannot deny myself the pleasure of answering it,

\* Keswick, January 26, 1812.

† So Godwin characterises Curran in the dedication to “Mandeville.”

‡ Quoted from Godwin’s letter to Shelley in a letter from Shelley to Miss Hitchener, postmark January 20, 1812. It is worth noting the occurrence of the expression “enthusiasm of humanity” in the same letter of Shelley’s.

CHAP. V. although we shall probably have reached Ireland before an answer to this can arrive. You do us a great and essential service by the enclosed introduction to Mr. Curran; he is a man whose public character I have admired and respected. You offer an additional motive for hastening our journey.

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I have not long been married. My wife is the partner of my thoughts and feelings. *My* state at the period of our first knowledge of each other was isolated and friendless; *hers* was embittered by family disagreements and a system of domestic oppressions. We agreed to unite our fates, and the reasons that operated to induce our submission to the ceremonies of the Church were the many advantages of benefiting society which the despotism of custom would cut us off from in case of our nonconformity. My peculiar reasons were considerations of the unequally weighty burden of disgrace and hatred which a resistance to this system would entail upon my companion. A man in such a case is a man of gallantry and spirit—a woman loses all claim to respect and politeness. She has lost modesty, which is the female criterion of virtue, and those whose virtues extend no farther than modesty regard her with hatred and contempt.

You regard early authorship detrimental to the cause of general happiness. I confess this has not been my opinion, even when I have bestowed deep and I hope disinterested thought upon the subject. If any man would determine, sincerely and cautiously, at *every* period of his life, to publish books which should contain the real state of his feelings and opinions, I am willing to suppose that this portraiture of his mind would be worth many metaphysical disquisitions; and one, whose mind is strongly imbued with an ardent desire of communicating pleasurable sensations is of all others the least likely to publish any feelings or opinions but such as should excite the reader to discipline in some sort his mind into the same state as that of the writer.

With these sentiments I have been preparing an address to the Catholics of Ireland, which, however deficient may be its execution, I can by no means admit that it contains one sentiment which *can* harm the cause of liberty and happiness. It consists of the benevolent and tolerant deductions of philosophy reduced into the simplest language, and such as those who by their uneducated poverty are most susceptible of evil impressions from Catholicism may clearly comprehend. I know it can do no harm; it cannot

excite rebellion, as its main principle is to trust the success of a cause to the energy of its truth. It cannot "widen the breach between the kingdoms," as it attempts to convey to the vulgar mind sentiments of universal philanthropy; and whatever impressions it may produce, they can be no others but those of peace and harmony; it owns no religion but benevolence, no cause but virtue, no party but the world. I shall devote myself with unremitting zeal, as far as an uncertain state of health will permit, towards forwarding the great ends of virtue and happiness in Ireland, regarding as I do the present state of that country's affairs as an opportunity which if I, being thus disengaged, permit to pass unoccupied, I am unworthy of the character which I have assumed. Enough of Ireland!

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I anticipated in my own mind your sentiments on the remark which you quoted from my last letter concerning my father. I am not a stranger to the immense complexity of human feelings, but when I find generosity so exceedingly outweighed in any one's conduct by the contrary and less extended principle, then I despair of good fruits, seeing marks of barrenness. I have a great wish of adding to my father's happiness, because the filial connection seems to render it, as it were, more particularly in my power; but it is impossible. A little while since he sent to me a letter, through his attorney, renewing an allowance of two hundred pounds per annum, but with the remark "that his sole reason for so doing was to prevent my cheating strangers." The insult contained in these words, as applied to me, excites no feeling of repulsion or hatred towards him, but it makes me despair of conciliation, when I see how rooted is his prejudice against me.

I find myself near the end of my paper. My egotism appears inexhaustible. My relation of pupilage with regard to you in a manner excuses this apparent vanity. I wish to put you in possession of as much of my thoughts and feelings as I know myself. I shall regard as a most inestimable blessing my happy audacity in casting aside the trammels of custom and drinking the streams of your mind at their fountain-head.

I will say no more of Wales at present. We have determined, next summer, to receive a most dear friend [Miss Hitchener], of whom I shall speak hereafter, in some romantic spot. Perhaps I shall be able to prevail on you and your wife and children to leave the tumult and dust of London for a while. However that



CHAP. V. may be, I shall certainly see you in London. I am not yet of age.  
 Aug. 1811- At that time I have great hopes of being enabled to offer you a  
 Feb. 1812. house of my own. Philanthropy is confined to no spot.—Adieu!

Direct your next "Post Office, Dublin." My wife sends her respects.

Believe me, in all sincerity of heart, yours truly, sincerely,

P. B. SHELLEY.

Early in February—probably on Sunday, February 2—Shelley with his wife and sister-in-law left Keswick. It was with regret that they parted from the little mountain town which had given them harbourage for three months; but although Shelley had bade farewell to Southey in a friendly manner, promising to write to him from Ireland, the central charm of Keswick was gone for him when he ceased to venerate and admire the presiding intellectual presence of the place. "I passed Southey's house," he wrote, "without one sting. He is a man who *may* be amiable in his private character, stained and false as is his public one. He *may* be amiable, but, if he is, my feelings are liars, and I have been so long accustomed to trust to them in these cases that the opinion of the world is not the likeliest criminator to impeach their credibility."\* At a later date Shelley rediscovered something of Southey's true character, and looked back with pleasure to the kindness with which he had been received in the hospitable circle of Greta Hall.†

On February 3 the travellers were at Whitehaven, eagerly waiting for nightfall, when they might escape from a "filthy town and horrible inn." The wind which was to blow their ship to the Isle of Man was fresh and favourable. Strong in hope and nerve, Shelley looked forward to his work as an evangelist in Ireland. It is probable that February gales kept the ship for some days weather-bound in Douglas harbour.

\* To Miss Hitchener, postmark Whitehaven, February 3.

† See Shelley's letter to Southey of March 7, 1816, printed in the Appendix to Southey's "Correspondence with Caroline Bowles."

When at length they set sail in a slate-galiot, a storm whirled CHAP. V. them quite to the north of Ireland. For eight and twenty <sup>Aug. 1811-</sup> hours they tossed in their little barque; and it was not till <sup>Feb. 1812.</sup> the night of February 12 that the wanderers found themselves safe, after perils by sea and a weary journey by land, in Dublin city.

## CHAPTER VI.

WANDERINGS (*continued*).

IRELAND—WALES—DEVON. FEBRUARY, 1812, TO AUGUST, 1812.

CHAP. VI. IRELAND in 1811-12, enduring the grief of thwarted aspiration and baffled hopes, resounded with indignant complaint. When the first lethargy which followed the Act of Union had passed away, the national spirit had had its outbreak—weak and wild—in the insurrection under Robert Emmet; and a little later the friends of religious freedom had begun to organize themselves afresh for a renewed advance against the principles of Protestant ascendancy. The Union, as was natural, had not brought peace or prosperity to a country whose ills were too deep-seated to be cured by Act of Parliament. The Irish National Debt, rapidly increasing under the Parliament of Grattan, continued to mount up, though now with less headlong speed.\* With a rising debt taxation was augmented; the revenue, indeed, grew larger, but it was found more difficult than heretofore to collect taxes. Imports and exports increased, but agitators were ready to explain away the facts, or to assert that they increased at a less rapid rate than in the years which preceded the Union. Dublin had sunk from a metropolitan to a provincial city, and henceforth could be no prouder than Edinburgh. Absentee landlords, at all times a

\* The debt in 1791 amounted to £2,442,890; it had increased tenfold in the nine years before the Union. In the ten years which followed the Union it increased not quite fourfold.

curse of Ireland, distributed their wealth—two millions, it was reckoned—among strangers, while middle-men rack-rented the unhappy tenants. As before, so after the Union, tithe-proctors, with their remorseless exactions, and grand juries with road-jobbing presentments, came to shear the already shorn, and reduce their victims from misery to despair. “Captain Thresher” and his followers in Connaught, in their white shirts or frocks, fell upon the tithe-corn and destroyed it, visited solitary houses in search of arms, sometimes even dared to face the red-coats. To the Threshers had succeeded the parties of Shanavests and Caravats, hostile to each other, but alike indignant at the requisition of tithes and the alleged exorbitancy of advancing rents. In 1810 the public bodies of Ireland lamented over the decay of trade as they had lamented again and again before the Union. The corporations of Dublin “viewing the distressed and deplorable state of our manufactures in every branch,” and “the general gloom and misery that pervade this unfortunate land,”\* passed resolutions in favour of a repeal of the Union by a majority of thirty. In September of that year an aggregate meeting of the citizens, freemen, and freeholders of the city of Dublin met in the Royal Exchange, and adopted a petition to be presented to the king and Parliament praying for repeal, while at the same time they loyally recorded their unqualified approbation of the conduct of the Duke of Richmond as viceroy. That Ireland was advancing towards prosperity is certain; but the movement of advance was slow during the early years of the century as compared with that which took place in its second and third quarters.

The movement on behalf of Catholic Emancipation had halted for a brief period after the Union in bewilderment and despondency. It had been represented to Catholics that no hope of enfranchisement for them could lie with a separate

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\* The words are from the requisition of grand jurors to the sheriffs to summon a meeting to petition for repeal of the Union.

CHAP. VI. Irish Parliament, which must view Catholic Emancipation as  
Feb.-Aug. 1812. a complete reversal of the existing order of things, the Protestant representatives thereby passing from their position as a ruling oligarchy into that of a powerless minority. "Help us to carry the Union," it was said, "and there will be no insuperable difficulty, with such aid as may be had from Cornwallis and Pitt, in admitting a Catholic minority into the Imperial Parliament." But, the Union once effected, the Catholic question was dismissed or set aside, and the chiefs of the Catholic party were left to brood over their wrongs and their credulity in sullen indignation. When, in 1805, a stir began to be made, the true leaders were not in their places, and Ryan, a Dublin merchant, became the self-constituted delegate of his co-religionists, entering as such into correspondence with Fox and the English Whigs. It was not without a tussle that the guidance of affairs was wrested from Ryan's hands, and placed in those of stronger and wiser men. Among these the Catholic aristocracy was admirably represented by Lord Fingall; the Catholic barristers, now becoming a power in politics, contributed a prime force to the movement in the person of O'Connell, who knew, as no other man in Ireland knew, when to be crafty and when to be bold. A Catholic committee was formed which constituted a centre of action, and it was agreed to draw up a petition to Parliament. To belong to such a committee was not unattended with peril. The Convention Act, passed in 1793, and at first directed against the organization of the United Irishmen, declared all committees or assemblies unlawful which were appointed to represent the people, "under pretence of petitioning" for any alteration in matters established by law in Church or State. In appointing the Catholic committee sufficient care was not taken to avoid the dangers arising from the Convention Act; thirty-six members sat for Dublin; ten for each county in Ireland. It seemed worth while to risk something; the Convention Act had lain dormant for eighteen years; the Prince Regent was

supposed to be secretly on the side of religious freedom, and CHAP. VI.  
was said to have given pledges and promises of his support; Feb.-Aug.  
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the Duke of Richmond was a viceroy of conciliation rather than repression. Suddenly thunder was heard in what had looked a clear sky. On February 12, 1811, the Irish Secretary, Mr. W. Wellesley Pole—brother of Sir Arthur Wellesley—issued a circular letter to every sheriff and magistrate, requiring them to arrest all persons either actively or passively connected with the late election of members of the general committee of the Catholics of Ireland. The committee met, Lord Ffrench presiding, in the presence of magistrates sent from Dublin Castle, and obtained an ambiguous triumph over Mr. Wellesley Pole; but prudent counsels prevailed, and it was decided to dissolve the committee and appeal to an aggregate meeting of Catholics. On July 9 the aggregate meeting, presided over by the Earl of Fingall, resolved that a new committee should be appointed, and that it was best to see matters out with the Government. Immediately the Lord-Lieutenant and Privy Council issued a proclamation reaffirming the orders previously given in Mr. Wellesley Pole's circular letter; but Curran, who was present at the meeting of the Privy Council, refused to attach his signature to the proclamation, and other members joined with him in the refusal. All over Ireland meetings were held during the summer of 1811 for the election of managers to the Catholic committee, and from a hundred platforms the leading Catholics and liberal Protestant gentlemen declaimed, vaticinated, and returned thanks to one another. The first meeting of the new committee took place in the theatre, Fishamble Street, Dublin, on October 19; pit, boxes, and galleries were crowded; about one hundred and fifty of the most distinguished members of the committee filled the stage; the Earl of Fingall, supported by a long train of peers, baronets, and gentry, occupied the chair. The draft of a petition was read and approved, and the meeting, having accomplished its work, was at an end,

CHAP. VI. when two police magistrates showed themselves, who had  
 Feb.-Aug. come with the purpose of dispersing the unlawful assembly.  
 1812.

It was explained to them in courteous terms that they had arrived too late. The Catholic delegates retired, congratulating one another on a fortunate triumph. A few days later commenced in the Court of King's Bench the trial of Dr. Sheridan, a member of the Catholic committee. The jury was carefully selected by the Crown; the Attorney-General prosecuted, arguing that the committee was a representative assembly, and that the word "pretence" of petitioning, as used in the Convention Act, meant simply "purpose;" the charge of Chief Justice Downes made clear the case against the traverser. It was nine o'clock on a November night when the jury retired, but the hall of the Four Courts, all the adjoining avenues, the very attic windows at the top of the courts, were crowded. Having deliberated for an hour and a half, the jury returned, and the foreman handed down the issue—*not guilty*. A deafening peal of triumph rang through the court, and was taken up outside; as the jurors passed through the hall they were greeted with waving of hats and clapping of hands; the news ran like wildfire through the streets, and was announced from the gallery of the theatre as the curtain fell on the last act of the play. Meanwhile the military patrolled the city; the garrison had orders to be in readiness, and the artillery were directed to limber up their guns.

The Catholic triumph, however, was short-lived, and disaster speedily followed. Counter-prosecutions, rashly promoted, against Chief Justice Downes resulted in a judgment against the Catholics. A second government prosecution under the Convention Act was carried by the Crown to a successful issue. It was proved that by using extraordinary care at least one jury could be brought together which would convict. A few days before Shelley arrived in Dublin, Mr. Kirwan, the convicted delegate, received sentence—the fine of one mark—for his misdemeanour. The Catholic committee was scat-

tered or in abeyance, though a Catholic Board still remained; CHAP. VI.  
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1812. the principle of delegation stood condemned. The high hopes and enthusiasm of the summer and autumn of 1811 were succeeded by discouragement, though not yet by apathy or despair.\*

Shelley at nineteen years old was possessed by an inextinguishable hope for the world and an enthusiasm of humanity which never ceased to inspire his deeds and words. He had a conviction that it is in the power of every one, young or old, to do something to bring nearer the world's great age; that it is the duty of every one to contribute something to the public good. He had not yet measured his own powers, and he possessed some of the self-confidence of youth and inexperience, together with that faith in itself which seems to be conferred on genius to sustain it in its contention with the world. But his confidence chiefly arose from his ardent belief in certain truths or doctrines—luminously self-evident, as they appeared to him, yet unapprehended by the mass of men—truths or doctrines of which he was to be a preacher, and, if need be, the martyr. These principles he held in an abstract or generalized form; but is a truth much the worse when it has been nicknamed an "abstraction"? Let each age and each country adapt to its own needs the common creed of all. Of Irish parties and internal politics Shelley knew but little; he was not the first or last of his countrymen who fancied that by a promenade in Ireland he could restore order from the chaos. But though Shelley had no close grip of concrete facts, he held in his hand a gospel—the gospel of reason and charity, of virtue and freedom, of William Godwin and Political Justice; and doubtless, amid the rival bigotries of Irish religions and the fierce strife of contending interests, there was a need for such a

\* For the above sketch, beside the Dublin newspapers of the day and other sources, I have used Wyse's "Historical Sketch of the Late Catholic Association," and W. H. Hamilton's "State of the Catholic Cause," etc.—a series of reports of meetings, trials, etc. (Dublin, 1812).



CHAP. VI. gospel. Shelley came to tell the Irish people that Catholic  
Feb.-Aug. 1812. Emancipation was good, but chiefly as a pledge or promise of  
the ultimate victory of reason over all intolerance and all  
superstition, including Catholicism itself; that the repeal of  
the Union was better, for it would at once bring some relief  
to the overburdened poor, and restore wealthy proprietors  
who had deserted the country to a sense of their duties and  
privileges at home: but that there was something far beyond  
either of these occasional or temporary benefits towards which  
men should look with eyes of ardent hope—a far-off millen-  
nium of freedom, virtue, equality, happiness; that this could  
not be attained by sudden or violent measures; that it involved  
a great moral and intellectual change; that moral effects were  
to be looked for in the future as the result of moral causes  
put in operation to-day; that what Irishmen, therefore, needed  
before all else was not the emancipation of Catholics, not  
even the repeal of the Union, but sobriety, regularity, know-  
ledge, thought, peace, benevolence—in a word, virtue and  
wisdom; “when you have those things,” he said, “you may  
defy the tyrant.”

In first-floor rooms at No. 7, Sackville Street, a house  
belonging to Mr. Dunne, a woollen-draper, Shelley and his  
party speedily found lodgings. Standing on the balcony  
outside his windows, he could see, and almost hear, the Liffey  
gliding under its bridges, and survey the widest avenue  
of Dublin—an unbroken vista from the Rotunda, at its  
northern end, to the late Houses of Parliament, beyond the  
river, to the south.\* Having breakfasted, and devoured with  
greater eagerness his letters from Miss Hitchener, Shelley  
sallied forth to put into a printer's hand the manuscript  
of an “Address to the Irish People,” which he had written  
before leaving Keswick. It was intended for the poor, and

\* The balcony was removed in 1884, and the house is now partitioned into  
a print-seller's shop and a restaurant. The Nelson Column was in process of  
erection in 1812; the post-office was not yet built.

at first Shelley's wish had been that it should be "printed CHAP. VI.  
in large sheets to be stuck about the walls of Dublin." \* He Feb.-Aug.  
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secretly hoped that it might be followed by other pamphlets,  
designed "to shake Catholicism on its basis, and to induce  
Quakerish and Socinian principles of politics, without objecting  
to the Christian religion, which would do no good to the  
vulgar just now, and cast an odium over the other principles  
which are advanced." The language of the pamphlet had  
purposely been "vulgarized" to adapt it to the humblest  
capacity among readers. The plan of printing the address as  
a broadsheet was abandoned, and the price of the pamphlet,  
of which fifteen hundred meanly printed copies were struck  
off, was fixed at the modest sum of a five-penny bit. Harriet  
and their friend at Hurstpierpoint had feared that Shelley was  
deliberately preparing for himself a reception in one of his  
Majesty's prisons; but the writer of the pamphlet had no such  
apprehension. He felt that he came to Ireland more as the  
preacher of moral and intellectual reform than as a political  
agitator; that he pleaded for order rather than for revolution;  
or if for revolution, for one remote and vast, undertaken in the  
name of order, and to be approached solely by a moral and  
intellectual advance. He had now in hand a second pamphlet,  
offering proposals for an Association of Philanthropists desirous  
to accomplish the regeneration of Ireland. The association  
might regard Catholic Emancipation and the repeal of the  
Union as its immediate objects, but these only occupied the  
foreground of a prospect wide and deep. The means of opera-  
tion were to be discussion and debate, with such united effort  
for carrying reform into effect as might be free from violence  
and disorder. There was no necessity to define precisely the  
remoter objects of the association; it would always aim at  
the spread of knowledge and the promotion of virtue; it would  
form a bond of union between men of benevolence and men

\* To Miss Hitchener: Keswick [postmark January 20, 1812]. Shelley mentions in a later letter that Paine's works were printed in this way.

CHAP. VI. of ideas. "The endeavours of the truly virtuous necessarily converge to one point, though it be hidden from them what point that is." In a word, Shelley's proposed association was to be an association for making men better; it was to be primarily moral, and as such it was to deal with politics; for politics, Shelley argued, are but a department of morals. Here had been the cause of the failure of the French Revolution. It had been preceded by a brilliant intellectual movement; that in itself was well, for "knowledge is incompatible with slavery." But the French people had not been fitted for the possession of freedom by any moral movement preceding the Revolution. Voltaire was "a flatterer of kings;" Rousseau "gave licence by his writings to passions that only incapacitate and contract the human heart." But

"The sensual and the dark rebel in vain,  
Slaves by their own compulsion;"

or, as Shelley puts it, "that happy state of equal law" to which he looked forward as the consummate flower of civilization "demands habits of the strictest virtue before its introduction." "Before the restraints of government are lessened," said Shelley, addressing the Irish people at a time when restraints were many and strict, "it is fit that we should lessen the necessity for them." "I cannot," he said, "expect a rapid change. . . . We can expect little amendment in our own time, and . . . must be contented to lay the foundation of liberty and happiness by virtue and wisdom." A "cautious awe" is the temper of mind in which we ought to gaze forward and advance towards the future golden age of freedom and of love.

Whether such principles as these are important truths, cheap truisms, mere revolutionary fallacies, or a mixture of all these, they were certainly the principles which Shelley, at the age of nineteen, put forward in his Irish pamphlets. They were certainly not calculated to flatter or conciliate his readers; but he had the satisfaction of feeling that he had

delivered with openness and perfect sincerity the message of CHAP. VI.  
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1812. his mind. Here and there a free-thinking revolutionary spirit might be almost wholly in agreement with the writer of the address and proposals; but such spirits were not very numerous in Ireland. Devout Catholics and serious-minded Protestants could hardly fail to discover an atheist, at the least a deist, in one who was equally indifferent to the Council of Trent and the Convocation of Canterbury, and who declared that "all religions are good which make men good." Fiery patriots—survivors of the United Irishmen—could not set much store by the prophesyings of an Englishman who would advocate only such changes as are "compatible with the English constitution," who pleaded against secret societies and a resort to force. Practical men of action, like Scully and O'Connell, could have little in common with a boy-dreamer, who supposed that he had mastered Irish politics in a week, and whose chief thoughts and hopes were centred in a vaporous millennium of equality and freedom, resplendent and remote as a sunset palace in the western sky.

Until some days after the appearance of his "Address," on February 25, Shelley had lived in comparative seclusion, occupied in drawing up his second pamphlet. "We have seen very little of the Irish as yet," Harriet told Miss Hitchener (February 27); "but when Percy is more known, I suppose we shall know more at the same time." He could not ally himself unreservedly to any political party. "Good principles," he wrote, "are scarce here. The public papers are either oppositionist or ministerial; one is as contemptible and narrow as the other. I wish I could change this. I, of course, am hated by both these parties. The remnant of United Irishmen, whose wrongs make them hate England, I have more hopes of. I have met with no determined Republicans, but I have found some who are democratifiable.\*"

On arriving in Dublin, Shelley, bearing in his hand

\* To Miss Hitchener, February 27, 1812.

CHAP. VI. Godwin's letter of introduction, had called at Curran's house ;  
 Feb.-Aug. 1812. but Curran was not at home, and though Shelley repeated the call more than once, the result was still the same. The incorruptible young reformer began to discover that Curran, like Southey, was a hireling, and to dislike him for having accepted the office of Master of the Rolls. Though few visitors came, the days went by quickly and not unhappily in the Sackville Street lodgings. Great things might soon be expected, when the pamphlet should make its appearance. Harriet sympathized with her husband in his mission, and had suddenly been transformed into a patriotic Irishwoman. "I am Irish," she had written to Miss Hitchener when about to quit Keswick ; "I claim kindred with them. I have done with the English. I have witnessed too much of John Bull, and I am ashamed of him. Till I am disappointed in the brothers and sisters of my affection, I will claim kindred with those brave sons of the ocean ; and when I am deceived in them it will be enough." \* Eliza Westbrook's opinions, which had been gradually rectifying, were now almost purified to proof. Two important works engaged her thoughts—a red cloak, offspring of her artistic fancy, and, when this should be complete, a collection of the "useful passages" from the writings of Tom Paine. Has it been recorded of the great prophet of Islam or any other inspired teacher that he ever converted his sister-in-law ? Eliza, the eldest of the party, had, moreover, evidently been assigned the position of sense-carrier to the others, and as such she held the common purse.

Shelley's publications were still in the future ; and their anticipated profits were in the paulo-post-future, and meanwhile his outgoings were considerable. "Well do I know," he wrote to Miss Hitchener, echoing a pious sentiment of hers, "that economy is the truest generosity ; although we cannot practise it so strictly in Dublin as I could wish. This, however," he adds, with his characteristic knack of hoping, "will be short ;" and thereupon he breaks forth

\* January 29, 1812.

into a chant about the new republic set up in Mexico. CHAP. VI.  
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Miss Westbrook had nearer and dearer interests to consider than those of the revolutionists who listened to Cotopaxi's voice of freedom.\* "Eliza," writes Shelley, "keeps our common stock of money for safety in some hole or corner of her dress, but we are not all dependent on her, although she gives it out as we want it." Fortunately as yet afflicted patriots had not begun to prowl about the lodgings and sniff for the spoils hidden near Miss Westbrook's heart.

Nor was the other Elizabeth forgotten by her friends in Dublin. While Shelley penned his second pamphlet, the spiritual presence of Miss Hitchener leant over him and smiled approval. "I ought to count myself a favoured mortal," he wrote to her, "with such a wife and friend (these human names and distinctions perhaps are necessary in the present state of society)." He was not sure but that the agents of Government might inspect his letters to her, but he would continue to write as freely as from Keswick. And unquestionably, if a menial of tyranny had broken Shelley's seal and perused the contents of letters addressed to Hurstpierpoint, his face would have been as a book where men may read strange matters. Now the ecstatic protestations of eternal friendship, though written as prose, assume consciously or unconsciously the form of blank verse :—

"Thou art a conqueror, Time ; all things give way  
Before thee but ' the fixed and virtuous will ;'  
The sacred sympathy of soul which was  
When thou wert not, which shall be when thou perishest." †

\* "Cotopaxi! bid the sound  
Through thy sister mountains ring."  
(Shelley's lines on "The Mexican Revolution.")

Cotopaxi, I need hardly observe, is not in Mexico.

† February 14, 1812. A few of the lines which precede may be given here to show that the blank verse can hardly have been an accident :—

"I could stand  
Upon thy shores, O Erin, and could count

CHAP. VI. Now when Miss Hitchener spoke of the duty of earning her bread, and of her unwillingness to be dependent on her friend's generosity, he flung himself against her frail barriers of defence in words such as these: "You may not, when among us, procure your own subsistence: how much nobler a task to procure the happiness of those who love you! *Even* if this were all! Besides your writings, which, if they do not bring money, will at all events be *useful*. I am, too, now incapable of writing compared to what I shall be when I personally am enlightened with the emanations of your genius, and invigorated by the deductions of your reason. . . . Let us mingle our identities inseparably, and burst upon tyrants with the accumulated impetuosity of our acquirements and resolutions." \* The laboured sobriety of Shelley's pamphlets and his letters to Godwin were perhaps oppressive to a philosopher of nineteen, and he obtained the desired relief in such outbreaks as these. To Godwin spoke the dialectician; to his imagined Cythna, the poet.

That Miss Hitchener must join them in Wales, bringing with her, if she should please, "the dear little Americans," was not to be questioned. One difficulty, and only one, presented itself—how should she be named by them when she came? "for Eliza's name," observed Shelley, "is 'Eliza,' and 'Miss Hitchener' is too long, too broad, and too deep." "Do, dear—dear—what am I to call you?" exclaims Harriet—"hasten your departure for us." The republican school-mistress pondered this weighty matter, and resolved in favour of the name of Cato's daughter, and Brutus' wife—the Roman

The billows that, in their unceasing swell,  
Dash on thy beach, and every wave might seem  
An instrument in Time, the giant's grasp,  
To burst the barriers of Eternity.  
Proceed, thou giant, conquering and to conquer ;"

and so on for several succeeding lines. Some of the lines appear (with variations of text) in section ix. of "Queen Mab."

\* Undated, but probably February 24, 1812.

*Portia*. But innocent Harriet was taken aback by a style CHAP. VI.  
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1812. so lofty and classical. "I do not like the name you have taken; but, mind, only the name. You are fully worthy of it; but, being a name so much out of the common way, it excites so much curiosity in the mind of the hearer. This is my only reason for not liking it. I had thought it would have been one more common and more pleasing to the ear." \* The objection was timidly offered, and *Portia* was a name clinging too close to the consciousness of Miss Hitchener to be laid aside on account of Harriet's childish scruples.

Not quite a fortnight had passed in Dublin when the "Address," duly advertised in an evening paper, made its appearance. Shelley's hands at once were full of business, scattering the good seed on the winds of spring. "For two days," he informed Miss Hitchener, to whom he had already despatched the first sheet of his pamphlet, "I have omitted writing to you, but each day has been filled up with the employment of disseminating the doctrines of philanthropy and freedom. I have already sent four hundred of my little pamphlets into the world, and they have excited a sensation of wonder in Dublin; eleven hundred yet remain for distribution. Copies have been sent to sixty public-houses. No prosecution is yet attempted. I do not see how it can be. Congratulate me, my friend, for everything proceeds well. I could not expect more rapid success." If only the patriot party in Ireland could see that morality, not expediency, was the true principle of politics! But of this Shelley hoped to convince them. "To expect that evil will produce good, or falsehood generate truth, is almost as rational as to conceive of a patriot king or a sincere lord of the bedchamber." Would that Elizabeth Hitchener were by his side, to share with him "the high delight of awakening a noble nation from the lethargy of its bondage," and by the resources of her powerful intellect to mature and organize his undeveloped schemes!

\* March 14, 1812.



CHAP. VI. "For expectation is on the tiptoe. I send a man out every day to distribute copies, with instructions how and where to give them. His accounts correspond with the multitudes of people who possess them. I stand at the balcony of our window, and watch till I see a man *who looks likely*; I throw a book to him. On Monday [March 2] my next book makes its appearance. This is addressed to a different class, recommending and proposing associations. I have in my mind a plan for proselytizing the young men at Dublin College. Those who are not entirely given up to the grossness of dissipation are perhaps reclaimable." This last project, possibly for lack of Miss Hitchener's fostering presence, was not carried into effect, and the learned youths, we must fear, remained to the last unreclaimed. But what might not be done when Miss Hitchener and he should unite their forces a few weeks hence in Wales? Might not associations, similar to that started in Dublin, be extended all over England, and the country be thus quietly revolutionized? "My youth," Shelley adds, "is much against me here. Strange that truth should not be judged by its inherent excellence, independent of any reference to the utterer. To improve on this *advantage*, the servant gave out that I was only fifteen years of age. The person who was told this, of course, did not believe it." But youth has its pleasures as well as its afflictions, and Harriet at least entered into the work of evangelization with a certain sense of girlish frolic. "I am sure," she wrote in Percy's letter to Miss Hitchener, while her husband was called away by business, "you would laugh were you to see us give the pamphlets. We throw them out of window, and give them to men that we pass in the streets. For myself I am ready to die of laughter when it is done, and Percy looks so grave. Yesterday he put one into a woman's hood of a cloak; she knew nothing of it, and we passed her. I could hardly get on, my muscles were so irritated." \*

\* February 27, 1812.

The day following that on which this letter was written CHAP. VI.  
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1812. was a day of political stir and excitement in Dublin. It had been decided that on February 28 an aggregate meeting of the friends of Catholic Emancipation should be held in Fishamble Street Theatre, to consider the drafts of an address to the Prince Regent, and a petition to both Houses of Parliament. Fishamble Street, hard by Christ Church Cathedral and Dublin Castle, was a place of some importance in the old city, and was famous for its clubs and convivial gatherings. In the theatre Handel had conducted his own oratorios, when the goddess of dulness, alarmed for her British sovereignty, "drove him," as we read in the "Dunciad," "to th' Hibernian shore." It was a favourite place of assembly during the Catholic agitation; while orators and delegates occupied the stage and pit, ladies in full dress would crowd the boxes, and create an environment in which the higher flights of Celtic eloquence might sustain themselves with a happy confidence. Hither, at one o'clock on February 28, 1812, came Lord Fingall, the dignified and trusted leader of the Catholic cause; hither a train of noblemen and commoners, representing the wealth and influence of almost every county in Ireland; hither Mr. O'Connell, the burly tribune, whose large utterance was to sway the crowd that day; and hither also came "Mr. Shelley, an English gentleman," already known by his ardent pamphlet—a slender youth, with a look of high aspiration and resolve on his sensitive lips and in his wide blue eyes. Address and petition were read and adopted. O'Connell spoke at length, reviewing the late proceedings against the Catholic committee, grasping lightly and firmly a handful of telling facts, manipulating them with incomparable force and skill, and calling forth, with easy ascendancy over his audience, indignation, laughter, or resolve. A vote of thanks had been proposed to "the distinguished Protestants who have this day honoured us with their presence." In response to this resolution, Shelley rose and spoke for more than an hour. He was an English-

CHAP. VI. man, he told his hearers; and when he reflected on the crimes committed by his nation on Ireland, he could not but blush for his countrymen, did he not know that arbitrary power never failed to corrupt the heart of man. He had come to Ireland for the sole purpose of interesting himself in the misfortunes of the country, and impressed with a full conviction of the necessity of Catholic Emancipation, and of the baneful effects which the union with Great Britain had entailed upon Ireland. He had walked through the fields of the country and the streets of the city, and he had in both seen the miserable effects of that fatal step. He had seen that edifice which ought to have been the fane of their liberties converted into a temple of Mammon.\* He considered that the victims whose members were vibrating on gibbets had been driven to the commission of the crimes which they expiated by their lives by the effects of the Union, numbers of people having been thereby thrown out of manufacturing employments and left without the means of subsistence. He could not imagine that the religious opinions of a man should exclude him from the rights of society. The original founder of their religion taught no such doctrine. Equality in this respect was general in the American States, and why not here? Did a change of place change the nature of man? He would beg those in power to recollect the French Revolution, the suddenness, the violence with which it burst forth, and the causes which gave rise to it. He ended by expressing a hope that many years would not pass over his head before he had made himself conspicuous at least by his zeal on behalf of Emancipation and Repeal.†

Chief Baron Woulfe, an Irish judge, recalling to mind, after an interval of many years, the meeting of February 28, 1812, spoke of Shelley's mode of address as cold and precise;

\* The Houses of Parliament converted into the Bank of Ireland.

† This sketch of Shelley's speech is derived from reports in Dublin newspapers, reprinted in M'Carthy's "Shelley's Early Life," pp. 240-243.

he paused ever and anon, and delivered his slow sentences as CHAP. VI.  
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1812. so many disconnected aphorisms. A maiden-speech is seldom characterised by spontaneous movement or easy force. Shelley may in general have studiously avoided appeals to passion, and, compensating for his extremely youthful appearance by an excess of gravity, have given play to the moralist and dialectician within him rather than to the orator. Coming after O'Connell's masterful assault on the Government methods of securing verdicts, Shelley's abstract principles, exalted air, and phrases about virtue, benevolence, and freedom may have sounded somewhat stilted or unreal. Yet to a certain extent he carried his audience with him. When the young Englishman—son of an English member of Parliament—spoke of the wrongs inflicted by his country on Ireland, applause broke forth, which did not subside for several minutes. When he spoke of religion he was less fortunate; a freethinker in the Catholic camp is necessarily a suspected ally—more dangerous, perhaps, than an open foe; and Shelley might have ascertained, from the hisses with which his cherished sentiments were received, how frail and factitious must be the connection between an independent speculator and that political liberalism which is backed by a compact system of theological dogma. It can hardly be supposed that Shelley's speech gave satisfaction to Lord Fingall and the chief leaders of the movement; they did not care to embarrass their position by attacks upon the Union with Great Britain; they were aristocrats, not republicans or humanitarian dreamers; while urging their grievance, they desired to conciliate the Government by professions of loyalty. But they seem to have been patient with the young enthusiast—possibly they did not take him over-seriously. "I do not like Lord Fingall," Shelley wrote a fortnight later, "or *any* of the Catholic aristocracy. Their intolerance can be equalled by nothing but the hardy wickedness and falsehood of the Prince. My speech was misinterpreted. I spoke for more than an hour. The hisses

CHAP. XI. with which they greeted me when I spoke of *religion*, though  
 Feb.-Aug. 1812. in terms of respect, were mixed with applause when I avowed  
 my mission. The newspapers have only noted that which did  
 not excite disapprobation." \*

After the meeting of February 28, Shelley remained for more than a month in Dublin. For a few days there may have been a lull of excitement, while he waited for the appearance of his second pamphlet; but it cannot have been of long duration. On March 7 appeared in the *Dublin Weekly Messenger*, an article headed "Pierce Byshe Shelly, Esq.," which pointed out the young English gentleman as "a missionary of truth," devoted to "social benevolence," and a benefactor of the persecuted Mr. Finnerty to the amount of nearly a hundred pounds. Naturally, after this, Mr. Shelley had visitors, and we can imagine that No. 17, Grafton Street, to which he had lately moved from his Sackville Street lodgings, became a kind of Hibernian cave of Adullam—"and every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them." "My brain has hardly time to consult my heart," he wrote to Miss Hitchener on March 10th, "or my heart to consult my brain; yet with the remaining nature, with thee who constitutest the Trinity of my Essence, I will converse. I cannot recount all the horrible instances of unrestricted and licensed tyranny that have met my ears, scarcely those which have personally occurred to me." An Irishman has been torn from his wife and family in Lisbon, and compelled to serve as a common soldier, by that monster of anti-patriotic inhumanity, Beresford. "A poor boy, whom I found starving with his mother in a hiding-place of unutterable filth and misery—whom I rescued and was about to teach—has been snatched on a charge of false and villanous

\* To Miss Hitchener, March 14, 1812. O'Connell had no recollection of Shelley, having perhaps left the theatre when his own speech was ended.

effrontery to a magistrate of Hell, who gave him the alternative of the *tender* or of military servitude." A widow woman with three infants has been arrested on the charge of stealing a penny loaf; "she is, however, drunken, and nothing that I or any one can do can save her from ultimate ruin and starvation." "I am sick," proceeds Shelley, "of this city, and long to be with you and peace. The rich grind the poor into abjectness, and then complain that they are abject. They goad them to famine, and hang them if they steal a loaf." It was with a certain desperation that Shelley now clung to his project of illuminating and elevating the Irish people. "The association proceeds slowly, and I fear will not be established. Prejudices are so violent, in contradiction to my principles, that more hate me as a freethinker than love me as a votary of freedom. . . . I have at least made a stir here, and set some men's minds afloat. I *may* succeed, but I fear I shall not, in the main object of associations. . . . I have daily had numbers of people calling on me; *none* will do. The spirit of bigotry is high." In the midst of perplexities and with failure staring him in the face, he could at least find consolation in the knowledge that the spirit of Republicanism was extending in South America, and could look upward to Elizabeth Hitchener as a "star of peace" above the strife and turmoil. In a few weeks they might be side by side, engaged in founding associations in Wales; then he and Harriet and Eliza would accompany their new friend to Hurst, there to abide with her for ever.

Some interesting acquaintances Shelley had made during his residence in Dublin, which was now drawing towards a close. Curran, after long delay, called, and Shelley twice dined at his house; but in 1812 the genius of Curran was in its decline. The fire which animated his mean and decrepit person was sinking; the light had faded from his eye; his face looked yellow, wrinkled, and livid; he fell into fits of melancholy silence.\* Of the contrast, however, between

\* Sir Jonah Barrington confirms this description of Curran in 1812.

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Curran's earlier and later self, Shelley could be no judge, and on the occasion of his visits Curran was animated. What struck Shelley most and impressed him unfavourably, was the lack of elevation in Curran's table-talk. He had expected something different from the advocate of the United Irishmen, and the defender of Peter Finnerty. The weary Master of the Rolls, escaped from his official work, sought relief in easy conversation, witty turns of speech, and tales of drollery. Shelley had hoped ~~to~~ find him not uninterested in freedom, virtue, wisdom, and humanity. "Curran," he wrote to Godwin, "is certainly a man of great abilities, but it appears to me that he undervalues his powers when he applies them to what is usually the subject of his conversation. I may not possess sufficient taste to relish humour, or his incessant comicality may weary that which I possess. He does not possess that mould of mind which I have been accustomed to contemplate with the highest feelings of respect and love. In short, though Curran indubitably possesses a strong understanding and a brilliant fancy, I should not have beheld him with the feelings of admiration which his first visit excited, had he not been your intimate friend." \* More to Shelley's liking than Curran was Curran's devoted admirer, Mr. Lawless, a well-known Irish politician and a member of the Catholic Board. "Honest Jack Lawless," though he confessed that he regarded Shelley's ultimate hopes for society as visionary, was believed by his young friend to be of sound republican principles; he was ardent and energetic; more zealous, perhaps, than discreet; gifted with a certain eloquence, which served the purpose of agitation, but too flighty to be trusted for organizing, sustaining, or directing a great movement. In him and his wife, Shelley and Harriet found their most intimate Dublin friends. He it probably was who wrote the article in the *Weekly Messenger* setting forth Shelley's virtues and beneficence. For a time Shelley expected to obtain, in conjunction with

\* Shelley to Godwin.

Lawless, the command of a newspaper; and for a time he worked upon passages of Irish history which he hoped might be incorporated in Lawless's "Compendium of the History of Ireland," of which the earlier part was already in type. To the elder Medwin Shelley wrote from Dublin, inquiring how to raise two hundred and fifty pounds with a view to the publication of the joint work. It is not improbable that money—what amount we know not—was advanced to Lawless by Shelley; but Shelley's passages of Irish history never appeared in print. The manuscript pages accompanied him to Devonshire, where Miss Hitchener read them with delight and melancholy indignation—delight in Shelley's performance, indignation against the English rule in Ireland. It was decided to print the work by subscription as a seven-shilling volume—possibly no bookseller would undertake to publish so remorseless an exposure of the English system of government; but this, like many other projects of Shelley's, never reached accomplishment, and the passages of Irish history have disappeared beyond hope of recovery.

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We catch a glimpse of another Irish friend of the Shelleys from a letter of Harriet to Miss Hitchener, dated March 18. "My dear Portia," she wrote, ". . . I believe I have mentioned a new acquaintance of ours, a Mrs. Nugent, who is sitting in the room now and talking to Percy about virtue." Catherine Nugent, who was now more than twice as old as Harriet or Percy, and in old-fashioned style had changed the "Miss" to "Mrs.," was a woman of no ordinary character and intellect. Small of person and plain of feature, she yet charmed and attached those who rightly knew her by her energy of mind, by the vivacity of her conversation, and by the warmth and generosity of her heart. Though born a Catholic, she did not hold strictly by the creed or practices of her religion. "She has felt most severely the miseries of her country," wrote Harriet to Miss Hitchener, "in which she has been a very active member. She visited all the prisons in the time of the



CHAP. VI. Rebellion to exhort the people to have courage and hope." Miss  
 Feb.-Aug. 1812. Nugent in 1812 earned her living as assistant in a furrier's shop in Grafton Street—"there she is every day," says sympathetic Harriet, "confined to her needle." A poor man had offered her Shelley's pamphlet for a few pence, stating that a bundle of such papers had been given him by a young gentleman with directions to get what he could for them—at all events to distribute them. "Inquiry was made at Shelley's lodgings to ascertain the truth of the vendor's story. He was not at home, but when he heard of it he went to return the visit, and kindly acquaintanceship thus arose." At this time Shelley, his wife, and sister-in-law were recent converts to the principles of vegetarianism. "You do not know," wrote Harriet to Miss Hitchener on March 14, "that we have forsworn meat, and adopted the Pythagorean system. About a fortnight has elapsed since the change, and we do not find ourselves any the worse for it. . . . We are delighted with it, and think it the best thing in the world." But, although in the fervour of a new faith, they were not intolerant, and when Miss Nugent, after her day's work, would come to discourse with Percy or Harriet about virtue, they relaxed for her benefit the severity of their code, and, pitying her infirmity, presented for their friend's dinner a murdered fowl.\*

To confirm Shelley's growing apprehension that little good was to be done by him in Ireland, came letters of warning—almost of condemnation—from Godwin. On the appearance of his first pamphlet he had forwarded a copy to his philosophic friend, announcing at the same time a second pamphlet, in which he was about to recommend "the institution of a philanthropic society." Shelley had to meet the general objection of Godwin, that he, whose age disqualified him, should have come forward as a teacher of men; and a special objection

\* See the interesting article on Shelley in the *North British Review*, November, 1847, by my late friend, Dr. Anster. Miss Nugent supplied Dr. Anster with some of his information, and in his article I find the account of the origin of the acquaintance and mention of the "murdered fowl."

to his scheme of an association, such banding together of men CHAP. VI.  
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1812. for political purposes having been expressly condemned by the author of "Political Justice." "No *unnatural unanimity*," argued Shelley, "can take place, if secessions of the minority on any question are invariably made. It might segregate into twenty different societies, each coinciding generically, though differing specifically." And as to the position which he had prematurely assumed of preacher or teacher: "I hope that the motives which induce me to publish thus early in life do not arise from any desire of distinguishing myself any more than is consistent with and subordinate to usefulness. In the first place, my physical constitution is such as will not permit me to hope for a life so long as yours;—the person who is constitutionally nervous, and affected by slight fatigue at the age of nineteen, cannot expect firmness and health at fifty. I have therefore resolved to husband whatever powers I may possess, so that they may turn to the best account. I find that whilst my mind is actively engaged in writing or discussion, that it gains strength at the same time,—that the results of its present power are incorporated. I find that subjects grow out of conversation, and that though I begin a subject in writing with no definite view, it presently assumes a definite form, in consequence of the method that grows out of the induced train of thought. I therefore write, and I publish because I will publish nothing that shall not conduce to virtue, and therefore my publications, so far as they do influence, shall influence to good. My views of society, and my hopes of it, meet with congenial ones in few breasts. But virtue and truth are congenial to many. I will employ no means but these for my object, and however visionary some may regard the ultimatum that I propose, if they act virtuously they will, equally with myself, forward its accomplishment; and my publications will present to the moralist and metaphysician a picture of a mind, however uncultured and unformed, which had at the dawn of its knowledge taken a singular turn; and to leave out the

CHAP. VI. early lineaments of its appearance, would be to efface those which the attrition of the world had not deprived of right-angled originality. Thus much for egotism." \*

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Southey had afflicted Shelley by foreclosing discussion with the words, "When you are as old as I am you will think with me." Godwin gazed down on his young disciple from a yet higher elevation of years. "As far as I can yet penetrate into your character," he wrote, "I conceive it to exhibit an extraordinary assemblage of lovely qualities, not without considerable defects. The defects do and always have arisen chiefly from this source—that you are still very young, and that in certain essential respects you do not sufficiently perceive that you are so." It is not enough, went on Godwin, to imagine that the tendency of one's writings is towards good; a man must first qualify himself to judge of that tendency aright. Such an association as Shelley proposed would kindle passion, and hurry an impetuous people into untimely and violent action. Through the gradual influence of calm and dispassionate reason, change would come in its own due time; meanwhile, Shelley should remember, almost every institution or form of society is good in its place and in the period of time to which it belongs. If Shelley wished to improve himself by writing, let him by all means write: but why publish what he wrote? why especially publish with his name? "The life of a thinking man who does this will be made up of a series of retractions." To suppose that he would die early, because he was not hale and hardy at nineteen, was far from reasonable: the constitution of the body is a theatre of change, and probably at thirty or forty he would be a robust man.

"Your letter," replied Shelley † in a humble strain, though as yet unconvinced, "affords me much food for thought; guide thou and direct me. In all the weakness of my inconsistencies bear with me; the genuine respect which I bear for your

\* Shelley to Godwin: Dublin, February 24, 1812.

† March 8, 1812.

character, the love with which your virtues have inspired me, CHAP. VI.  
is undiminished by any suspicion of externally constituted Feb.-Aug.  
1812. authority; when you reprove me, Reason speaks; I acquiesce in her decisions. I know that I am vain, that I assume a character which is perhaps unadapted to the limitedness of my experience, that I am without the modesty which is so generally considered an indispensable ornament to the ingenuousness of youth. I attempt not to conceal from others or myself these deficiencies, if such they are. That I have erred in pursuance of this line of conduct I am well aware: in the opposite case I think that my errors would have been more momentous and overwhelming. 'A preponderance of resulting good is imagined in every action.' I certainly believe that the line of conduct which I am now pursuing will produce a preponderance of good; when I get rid of this conviction my conduct will be changed." Inquiry, with a view to correcting one's opinions, Shelley admits, is necessary; but this he did not neglect. "I am eagerly open to every new information. I attempt to read a book which attacks my most cherished sentiments as calmly as one which corroborates them." Nor had he studied Godwin's writings slightly, however his proposal of an association in Ireland might seem to discredit the statement. He daily recurs to Godwin's writings as allies in his cause. To "Political Justice" he owes his restoration from the state of intellectual sickliness and lethargy represented by his boyish romances "St. Irvyne" and "Zastrozzi." But will truth alone convert the world, without generous advocates of the truth united to press its claims upon an unheeding generation? It is nearly twenty years since "Political Justice" was first published. "What has followed? Have men ceased to fight? Have vice and misery vanished from the earth? Have the fireside communications which it recommends taken place? . . . I think of the last twenty years with impatient scepticism as to the progress which the human mind has made during this period. I will own that I am eager that something should be done."

CHAP. VI. The "Address to the Irish People" cannot leave the Irish worse  
 Feb.-Aug. 1812. than it found them. "Intemperance and hard labour have reduced them to machines. The oyster that is washed and driven at the mercy of the tides appears to me an animal of almost equal elevation in the scale of intellectual being." Why may not one try to awaken a moral sense in such creatures by the exhibition of moral truth? As to the association, Shelley conceived it to be strictly compatible with the principles of "Political Justice." The proposed societies might be reduced to three or four members by the voluntary secession of those who differed in opinion from the rest: such societies surely could not aim at violent or immediate action. Everywhere throughout the pamphlets pains have been taken to insist on the duty of pacific measures. "I had no conception," Shelley adds, "of the depth of human misery until now. The poor of Dublin are assuredly the meanest and most miserable of all. In their narrow streets thousands seem huddled together—one mass of animated filth. With what eagerness do such scenes as these inspire me! How self-confident, too, do I feel in my assumption to teach the lessons of virtue to those who grind their fellow-beings into worse than annihilation! These were the persons to whom, in my fancy, I had addressed myself: how quickly were my views on this subject changed; yet how deeply has this very change rooted the conviction on which I came hither!"\*

One more letter of remonstrance from Godwin, and Shelley, now discovering on his own account that the scheme of an association had proved impracticable, was reduced to submission. "Political Justice," its author admitted, had not converted the world in the course of a couple of decades; but what of that? "Oh that I could place you on the pinnacle of ages, from which these twenty years would shrink to an

\* In this letter Shelley quotes from some "suggestions" with reference to his proposed association which it was intended to print, but which do not appear to have actually been printed.

invisible point! It is not after this fashion that moral causes work in the eye of Him who looks profoundly through the vast and, allow me to add, venerable machine of human society. But so reasoned the French revolutionists. Auspicious and admirable materials were working in the general mind of France; but these men said as you say, 'When we look on the last twenty years we are seized with a sort of moral scepticism—we must own we are eager that something should be done.' And see what has been the result of their doings! He that would benefit mankind on a comprehensive scale, by changing the principles and elements of society, must learn the hard lesson—to put off self, and to contribute by a quiet but incessant activity, like a rill of water, to irrigate and fertilize the intellectual soil. Shelley, you are preparing a scene of blood!"

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The debate between the old and the young revolutionist in the dawn of this century of revolution is not without interest, and even instruction, for the present times. Shelley resisted no longer, although still unwilling to believe that bloodshed and ruin could follow from his words of peace. "I have said that I acquiesce in your decision," he wrote to Godwin on March 18, "nor has my conduct militated with the assertion. I have withdrawn from circulation the publications wherein I have erred, and am preparing to quit Dublin." Not that he believes such associations as he had proposed to be dangerous to society; but the scheme was ill-timed, for the ignorant Irish people are not yet qualified to put it to beneficial uses. Shelley will henceforth look for no speedy realization of his thoughts or hopes, but will endeavour to work for future ages. "It is indescribably painful," he writes, "to contemplate beings capable of soaring to the heights of science with Newton and Locke without attempting to awaken them from a state of lethargy so opposite. The part of this city called the Liberty exhibits a spectacle of squalidness and misery such as might reasonably excite impatience in a cooler tempera-

CHAP. VI. ment than mine. But I submit; I shall address myself no  
 Feb.-Aug. 1812. more to the illiterate. I will look to events in which it  
 will be impossible that I can share, and make myself the  
 cause of an effect which will take place ages after I have  
 mouldered in the dust. I need not observe that this resolve  
 requires stoicism. To return to the heartless bustle of ordinary  
 life, to take interest in its uninteresting details, I cannot.  
 Wholly to abstract our views from self, undoubtedly requires  
 unparalleled disinterestedness. There is not a completer  
 abstraction than labouring for distant ages."\* "Fear no more  
 for any violence or hurtful measures," Shelley wrote in con-  
 clusion, "in which I may be instrumental in Dublin. My  
 mind is now by no means settled on the subject of associations;  
 they appear to me in one point of view useful, in another de-  
 leterious. I acquiesce in your decisions. I am neither  
 haughty, reserved, nor unpersuadable. I hope that time will  
 show your pupil to be more worthy of your regard than you  
 have hitherto found him; at all events, that he will never be  
 otherwise than sincere and true to you."

On the same day on which Shelley wrote his last letter  
 from Ireland to William Godwin, he packed the remaining  
 copies of his pamphlets in a box, which was addressed to Miss  
 Hitchener, and forwarded to her by the Holyhead packet.  
 Beside the pamphlets the box contained copies of a "Declara-  
 tion of Rights," printed in the form of a folio poster or  
 broadside. In thirty-one brief aphorisms Shelley set forth his  
 political creed. Government has no rights; it exists only by  
 the consent of those who delegate to it certain powers re-

\* Godwin, in reply, rebukes Shelley for running from one extreme to the other. "I have often," he writes, "had occasion to apply a principle on the subject of education which is equally applicable here: 'Be not early discouraged; sow the seed, and after a season, and when you least look for it, it will germinate and produce a crop.' . . . Seeds of intellect and knowledge, seeds of moral judgment and conduct, I have sown, but the soil for a long time seemed 'ungrateful to the tiller's care.' It was not so. The happiest operations were going on quietly and unobserved, and at the moment when it was of the most importance, they unfolded themselves to the delight of every beholder."

claimable at will; the rights of man are liberty and an equal CHAP. VI.  
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1812. participation of the commonage of nature; liberty includes the right to think, the right to express one's thoughts, and the right to a certain degree of leisure; these rights are universal; the only use of government is to repress the vices of man; — these, and other principles in harmony with them, are announced with clearness, decision, and an absoluteness of thought and phrase.\* Among the contents of the large deal box was a letter from Harriet to her "dear Portia," written on St. Patrick's Night, when "the Irish always get very tipsy." "Poor Irish people!" she goes on, "how much I feel for them! Do you know, such is their ignorance, that when there is a drawing-room held, they go from some distance to see the people who keep them starving to get their luxuries; they will crowd round the state carriages in great glee to see those within who have stripped them of their rights, and who wantonly revel in a profusion of ill-gotten luxury, whilst so many of those harmless people are wanting bread for their wives and children. What a spectacle!" We perceive how faithfully Harriet had caught the tone of Shelley's manner of reflection. "Disperse the declarations," she advises Miss Hitchener; "Percy says the farmers are very fond of having something posted upon their walls. . . . All thoughts of an association are given up as impracticable. We shall leave this noisy town on April 7, unless the Habeas Corpus Act should be suspended, and then we shall be obliged to leave *as soon as possible*. Adieu." Shelley's consignment of "inflammable matter," as Harriet styles it, was inspected by the Surveyor of Customs at Holyhead, and Harriet's letter was found and read. Without delay the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Post Office, and the Irish Secretary, Mr. Wellesley Pole, were informed of the notable discovery; but these high officials were less dis-

\* Mr. Rossetti has compared Shelley's "Declaration of Rights" with the similar documents adopted by the Constituent Assembly, August, 1789, and proposed by Robespierre, April, 1793 (*Fortnightly Review*, January, 1871).



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No action in the matter seems to have been taken further than that the authorities resolved to have an eye on Miss Hitchener, and on that extraordinary young man, the son of the member for New Shoreham. The box, laden with high treason, probably found its way to Hurstpierpoint; but whether the daughter of Cato gratified the desire of the farmers for having their walls illustrated by the "Declaration of Rights" is not recorded in history; probably she kept the papers from public inspection, for Shelley subsequently warned her not to let them get into the hands of priests or aristocrats.

After a visit which had lasted seven weeks, Shelley with his wife and sister-in-law set sail from Dublin to Holyhead at two o'clock in the afternoon of Saturday, April 4. They tacked against a baffling wind to get clear of land; the whole of Sunday they struggled against the breeze; and at length, two hours past midnight, reached Holyhead in a drenching mist. Lighted by the sailors' lanterns, they scrambled for a mile over the rough way, and having tasted no food since leaving Dublin, and being much exhausted by the voyage, they forgot that they were Pythagoreans, and fell to with exceeding good will upon a supper of meat—the abhorred thing.\* It was Shelley's intention, when leaving Dublin, to settle, if possible, in Merionethshire; the beauty of the district had been vividly described in Godwin's novel "Fleetwood," and here it might be Shelley's happiness to receive the venerable author of

\* Medwin states (alleging Shelley's authority) that Shelley's departure from Ireland was occasioned by a hint from the police, and that he hastily took refuge in the Isle of Man. On his passage from Douglas to some port in Wales on board a small trading vessel, manned by only three hands, he encountered a storm. "The skipper attributed to Shelley's exertions so much of the safety of the vessel, that he refused on landing to accept his fare." If there is any truth in any part of this story, it must belong to his voyage in February from Whitehaven to Dublin. He never crossed the Irish Sea in November; he did not touch at the Isle of Man on his voyage to Holyhead; he left Dublin somewhat earlier, indeed, than was at first intended, but at the time he had himself fixed about three weeks previous to his departure. Mr. M'Carthy has erroneously named April 7 as the date of Shelley's departure from Ireland.

"Fleetwood" as his guest. Having rested for a day at Holy-CHAP. VI.  
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1812.head, the travellers started on Tuesday for the south; but no house of suitable size and suitable rent could they hear of within range of the scene of Fleetwood's early life. From Barmouth, with its sands and terraced rock, they set off in an open boat for Aberystwith, thirty miles distant by water. Here Harriet and Eliza had spent part of the last summer; but neither in the "sweet shire of Cardigan" could they discover a dwelling-place to their liking. At length, after a week's wandering, Shelley with his companions found himself (April 14) once more close to Cwm Elan, where his cousin Thomas Grove had his summer residence, and where he himself—not, as now, happy in the society of a wife and illuminated sister-in-law—had passed some weeks of the preceding July and August. Nantgwillt, named after the "wild brook" which flowed near, was an old and roomy house, beautifully situated a little above the junction of the Elan and Clearwen, and was distant about a mile or a mile and a half from the residence of Mr. Grove. The proprietor, a retired sea captain, had been involved in ruin by his brother's dishonesty—such was the story told to the Shelleys—and in the course of a few weeks the house and property must find a new tenant. It seemed in every respect a desirable place in which to settle. After the turmoil and misery of Dublin, and the hurry and fatigue of travel, here were solitude, beauty, and repose. Two hundred acres—one hundred and thirty arable, the rest wood and mountain—were attached to the house; by letting this, the moderate rent of ninety-eight pounds might be reduced to twenty pounds; or if Shelley, whom the Scotch marriage register described as a farmer, chose himself to farm the property, it would more than clear all expenses. As yet they could obtain possession of only a portion of the house, but when it was wholly in their hands, what should hinder them from receiving in this romantic retreat their venerable friend Godwin with his wife and family; their

CHAP. VI. adored Portia with her little nurslings of liberty; and perhaps her father, to whom the management of the farm would be an amusement, while his daughter and her friend might occupy themselves in promoting by their writings the highest interests of humanity? "We are now embosomed in the solitude of mountains, woods, and rivers," wrote Shelley to Miss Hitchener \*—"silent, solitary, and old; far from any town; six miles from Rhayader, which is nearest. A ghost haunts the house, which has frequently been seen by the servants. We have several witches in our neighbourhood, and are quite stocked with fairies and hobgoblins of every description." It was fit home for a poet, and some of the feelings which had possessed Shelley during his visit to the Irish capital now took form in verse. Here, perhaps, was written a short unpublished poem entitled "The Tombs," expressing a faith in the immortality of

"Courage and charity and truth  
And high devotedness,"

even in presence of the mouldering clay of the patriot's brain and heart, and amid the mournful emblems of the grave. To Nantgwillt also may belong the unpublished verses "On Robert Emmet's Grave"—a piece of seven stanzas, which thus reaches its close:—

"No trump tells thy virtues—the grave where they rest  
With thy dust shall remain unpolluted by fame,  
Till thy foes, by the world and by fortune carest,  
Shall pass like a mist from the light of thy name.

"When the storm-cloud that lowers o'er the day-beam is gone,  
Unchanged, unextinguished its lifespring will shine;  
When Erin has ceased with their memory to groan,  
She will smile through the tears of revival on thine." †

\* Postmark April 18, 1812.

† In a letter to Miss Hitchener, bearing the postmark April 18, 1812, Shelley writes, "I have written some verses on Robert Emmet, which you shall see, and which I will insert in my book of Poems." It is possible that "The Tombs" and "On Robert Emmet's Grave" were written in Dublin.

The metre was perhaps a reminiscence from Campbell's "On CHAP.VI.  
the green banks of Shannon when Sheelah was nigh." Feb.-Aug.  
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As late as 1878 a tourist to Cwm Elan, who loved the poetry of Shelley and knew the story of his life,\* came at Nantgwillt upon an old woman who remembered a visitor at Mr. Grove's house when she was a little girl and carried the post-bag—"a very strange gentleman," one who on week-days wore a little cap, and had his neck bare, but went on Sundays in a tall hat, and so nice-looking, with the family to church; who bought for her at the sale at Nantgwillt House the little brass kettle on which she had set her heart—"him that put the five-pound note on the boat." Who could the strange gentleman have been but Shelley? and in the memory of old Elizabeth Jones probably reminiscences of Shelley's visits of 1811 and 1812 had run together.† He loved, she said, to sail in the rapid mountain-streams a wooden boat about a foot in length, and would run along the banks, using a pole to direct his craft and keep it from shipwreck on the rocks. On one memorable occasion a banknote served as sail, and little Elizabeth wished that it had been hers. Once the young gentleman provided a captain or coxswain for his boat in the person of a cat; and she remembered his wild peals of laughter—for he was full of fun—when the cat, proving an unwilling sailor, leaped from shallop to rock, and then again from one rock to another, until the bank was reached.

"Nantgwillt, the place where we now reside," wrote Shelley to Godwin (April 25), "is in the neighbourhood of scenes marked deeply on my mind by the thoughts which possessed it when present among them. The ghosts of these old friends have a dim and strange appearance, when resuscitated in a situation so altered as mine is, since I felt that they were alive." There was, indeed, a wide difference between this nestling into the green valley, with Harriet by his side, and

\* My friend, Mr. W. J. Craig.

† The church-going probably belongs to 1811; the boat-sailing to 1812.

CHAP. VI. the solitary visit in the summer of 1811, when many causes  
 Feb.-Aug. 1812. conspired to render him dispirited, distraught, and at times  
 oppressed with morbid gloom. As Shelley thought of this his  
 feelings took shape in verse. In a poem, hitherto unprinted,  
 existing in Shelley's handwriting, and entitled "The Retro-  
 spect: Cwm Elan, 1812," he contrasts the Cwm Elan of 1811  
 with the same hills and vale and wood in these happier days  
 of the ensuing spring:—

"A scene which wildered fancy viewed  
 In the soul's coldest solitude,  
 With that same scene when peaceful love  
 Flings rapture's colour o'er the grove,  
 When mountain, meadow, wood, and stream  
 With unalloying glory gleam,  
 And to the spirit's ear and eye  
 Are unison and harmony.  
 The moonlight was my dearer day;  
 Then would I wander far away,  
 And, lingering on the wild brook's shore  
 To hear its unremitting roar,  
 Would lose in the ideal flow  
 All sense of overwhelming woe;  
 Or at the noiseless noon of night  
 Would climb some heathy mountain's height,  
 And listen to the mystic sound  
 That stole in fitful gasps around.  
 I joyed to see the streaks of day  
 Above the purple peaks decay,  
 And watch the latest line of light  
 Just mingling with the shades of night;  
 For day with me was time of woe  
 When even tears refused to flow;  
 Then would I stretch my languid frame  
 Beneath the wild woods' gloomiest shade,  
 And try to quench the ceaseless flame  
 That on my withered vitals preyed;  
 Would close mine eyes and dream I were  
 On some remote and friendless plain,  
 And long to leave existence there,  
 If with it I might leave the pain

That with a finger cold and lean  
Wrote madness on my withering mien.

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“It was not unrequited love  
That bade my wildered spirit rove ;  
’Twas not the pride disdaining life,  
That with this mortal world at strife  
Would yield to the soul’s inward sense,  
Then groan in human impotence,  
And weep because it is not given  
To taste on Earth the peace of Heaven.  
’Twas not that in the narrow sphere  
Where nature fixed my wayward fate  
There was no friend or kindred dear  
Formed to become that spirit’s mate,  
Which, searching on tired pinion, found  
Barren and cold repulse around ;  
Oh no ! yet each one sorrow gave  
New graces to the narrow grave.

“For broken vows had early quelled  
The stainless spirit’s vestal flame :  
Yes ! whilst the faithful bosom swelled,  
Then the envenomed arrow came,  
And apathy’s unaltering eye  
Beamed coldness on the misery ;  
And early I had learned to scorn  
The chains of clay that bound a soul  
Panting to seize the wings of morn,  
And where its vital fires were born  
To soar, and spurn the cold control  
Which the vile slaves of earthly night  
Would twine around its struggling flight.

“O many were the friends whom fame  
Had linked with the unmeaning name,  
Whose magic marked among mankind  
The casket of my unknown mind,  
Which hidden from the vulgar glare  
Imbided no fleeting radiance there.  
My darksome spirit sought, it found  
A friendless solitude around.

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For who that might undaunted stand,  
The saviour of a sinking land,  
Would crawl, its ruthless tyrant's slave,  
And fatten upon Freedom's grave,  
Tho' doomed with her to perish, where  
The captive clasps abhorred despair.

“ They could not share the bosom's feeling,  
Which, passion's every throb revealing,  
Dared force on the world's notice cold  
Thoughts of unprofitable mould,  
Who bask in Custom's fickle ray,  
Fit sunshine of such wintry day !  
They could not in a twilight walk  
Weave an impassioned web of talk,  
Till mysteries the spirits press  
In wild yet tender awfulness,  
Then feel within our narrow sphere  
How little, yet how great we are !  
But they might shine in courtly glare,  
Attract the rabble's cheapest stare,  
And might command where'er they move  
A thing that bears the name of love ;  
They might be learned, witty, gay,  
Foremost in fashion's gilt array,  
On Fame's emblazoned pages shine,  
Be princes' friends, but never mine !

“ Ye jagged peaks that frown sublime,  
Mocking the blunted scythe of Time,  
Whence I would watch its lustre pale  
Steal from the moon o'er yonder vale :

“ Thou rock, whose bosom black and vast  
Bared to the stream's unceasing flow,  
Ever its giant shade doth cast  
On the tumultuous surge below :

“ Woods, to whose depth retires to die  
The wounded echo's melody,

And whither this lone spirit bent  
The footstep of a wild intent :

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“ Meadows ! whose green and spangled breast  
These fevered limbs have often pressed,  
Until the watchful fiend Despair  
Slept in the soothing coolness there !  
Have not your varied beauties seen  
The sunken eye, the withering mien,  
Sad traces of the unuttered pain  
That froze my heart and burned my brain.

“ How changed since nature’s summer form  
Had last the power my grief to charm,  
Since last ye soothed my spirit’s sadness  
Strange chaos of a mingled madness !  
Changed !—not the loathsome worm that fed  
In the dark mansions of the dead  
Now soaring thro’ the fields of air,  
And gathering purest nectar there,  
A butterfly, whose million hues  
The dazzled eye of wonder views,  
Long lingering on a work so strange,  
Has undergone so bright a change.

“ How do I feel my happiness ?  
I cannot tell, but they may guess  
Whose every gloomy feeling gone,  
Friendship and passion feel alone ;  
Who see mortality’s dull clouds  
Before affection’s murmur fly,  
Whilst the mild glances of her eye  
Pierce the thin veil of flesh that shrouds  
The spirit’s inmost sanctuary.

“ O thou ! whose virtues latest known,  
First in this heart yet claim’st a throne ;  
Whose downy sceptre still shall share  
The gentle sway with virtue there ;  
Thou fair in form, and pure in mind,  
Whose ardent friendship rivets fast



## CHAP. VI.

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The flowery band our fates that bind,  
Which incorruptible shall last  
When duty's hard and cold control  
Had thawed around the burning soul;  
The gloomiest retrospects, that bind  
With crowns of thorn the bleeding mind;  
The prospects of most doubtful hue,  
That rise on Fancy's shuddering view;  
Are gilt by the reviving ray  
Which thou hast flung upon my day." \*

One literary acquaintance, who afterwards became a friend, Shelley is said to have met for the first time while staying during this spring and summer in the neighbourhood of Rhayader.† Thomas Love Peacock, in 1812, was in his twenty-seventh year—older by seven years than Shelley—and was already known as the author of several pieces of verse possessing a character and distinction of their own. He was a lover of Welsh landscape, and was drawn towards Carnarvonshire by a peculiar attraction, for there resided Miss Jane Gryffyth, who afterwards became his wife. In person, as well as in gifts of the mind, he was no ordinary man—tall and handsome, with a profusion of bright brown hair, extravagant in its disarray; eyes of fine, dark blue; massive brow; shapely features; graceful, laughing lips; and complexion as fair as a girl's.‡ His way of thinking was that of easy liberality. His conversation sparkled with keen, ironic wit; he told a good story, and brought out its point with vivacity. He viewed all things from a certain mundane point of view, mocking at the follies, affectations, and extravagances around him; yet he never became a mere man of the world. Something of the poet was

\* Printed by permission of Mr. Esdaille from the manuscript in his possession.

† So states Peacock's biographer and granddaughter; but I am not quite sure that she is right. If Shelley did not now meet Peacock, the acquaintance must have begun during his visit to London in the autumn.

‡ The description of Peacock's appearance is substantially that of his granddaughter, founded on a portrait of about this date. See biographical notice prefixed to Peacock's Works, p. xxxi.

curiously allied in him to the laughing philosopher. He was well read in Greek and Latin authors, had some knowledge of ancient art, and had already seen something of life and of society. Through Peacock's introduction it is probable that Shelley came into communication with Peacock's publishers, the Hookhams, of Bond Street; and it seems not unlikely that through this new acquaintance Shelley may have heard of the beauty of the country about Tremadoc, and of Mr. Madocks' great enterprise against the sea; for Peacock had spent a winter recently close to Tremadoc, in the village of Maentwrog, delighted with the romantic scenery, and yet more highly delighted with his "Carnarvonshire nymph."

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The happiness of the April days at Nantgwillt was soon dashed by anxieties and annoyance. Harriet, before the month had ended, was seriously ill, with a feverish gastric attack, which left her so weak that she could not walk across the room without assistance; it was deemed necessary to send for the nearest physician, at a distance of forty miles. Shelley was himself harassed with legal vexations, for the proprietor of Nantgwillt House refused to accept his new tenant without satisfactory security for the payment of rent, and this Shelley found himself unable to procure. Moreover, letters came in quick succession from Miss Hitchener, informing him of odious and scandalous reports current at Hurst and Cuckfield and Horsham with respect to him and her, and the visit which she proposed to pay to him and Harriet at midsummer. A flush of indignation mounted from Shelley's heart to his head. These slanders, he believed, were the mischievous inventions of Mrs. Pilfold, who feared that if Miss Hitchener left Sussex her children might lose the services of an admirable teacher. But neither Mrs. Pilfold nor Mr. Hitchener, who had forbidden his daughter to visit the Shelleys, should dash the cup of happiness from the lips of those about to drink. This short period of anxiety and distress was but "the probationary state" before they should "all enter the heaven

CHAP. VI. of virtue and friendship." Shelley instantly and impetuously wrote to Captain Pilfold and to Mr. Hitchener. Could the captain credit such malicious calumnies? And who was Mr. Hitchener that he should refuse an invitation addressed to his daughter? Who made him her governor? "You have agitated her mind until her frame is seriously deranged. Take care, sir; you may destroy her by disease, but her mind is free; *that* you cannot hurt. . . . Adieu. When next I hear from you I hope that time will have liberalized your sentiments."\* The captain did not credit the injurious reports, but was sure that Shelley was "very much attached" to Miss Hitchener. "I certainly should feel quite as much inclined to deny my own existence," Shelley wrote to his friend, "as to deny this latter charge, although I took care to assure him [Captain Pilfold] that in the vague sense which he had annexed to the word 'love' he was utterly mistaken." But a few days ago Shelley had asked nothing of the Fates but that they might fix him in a spot so lovely as this valley, so fit for the seclusion of those who think and feel. "Now I say, 'Fates give my Harriet health, give my Portia peace, and I will excuse the remainder of my requisition.'" But if Miss Hitchener's frame was deranged, at least her soul stood firm. "You are to my fancy as a thunder-riven pinnacle of rock, firm amid the rushing tempest and the boiling surge. Ay, stand for ever firm, and when our ship anchors close to thee, the crew will cover thee with flowers!" We smile at Shelley's boyish raptures; but it was the same temperament and the same idealizing imagination which, when matured and refined, gave to English poetry the rapture, swift and high, and the shining imagery of the "Epipsychidion."

Shelley's excitement and vexations were followed by a sharp feverish attack. Nantgwillt House could not be had without offering security for a considerable sum. "These

\* May 14. This letter had been preceded by one to Mr. Hitchener, written in a calmer and more conciliating strain.

accidents," said Shelley to Godwin, "are unavoidable to a CHAP.VI.  
 minor." It became evident that they must seek a home else- Feb.-Aug.  
 where. For a time they dreamed of visiting Italy, and 1812.  
 remaining abroad until Shelley should be of age; it was  
 hoped that the Italian climate would benefit his uncertain  
 health; meanwhile they might go to some seaside place and  
 there wait for passports. Early in June they bade reluctant  
 farewell to Nantgwillt, but delayed in its neighbourhood for  
 about a fortnight longer, guests, at Cwm Elan, of Mr. and  
 Mrs. Grove, whose company was not wholly to their liking.  
 Pecuniary embarrassment—a phrase too frequent and familiar  
 throughout Shelley's early life—detained them, for the Irish  
 campaign had been costly, and a quarter's allowance, fifty  
 pounds, had not yet arrived. It would be desirable to find  
 some modest place of abode; and from Godwin they had heard  
 of a cottage which might suit them at Chepstow, within reach  
 of Tintern Abbey and the woods and cliffs of Piercefield.  
 They had thought of pushing on to Ilfracombe, but if the  
 cottage at Chepstow proved to be attractive, they would settle  
 there—leave Eliza in possession of it, and make their way  
 across country to Hurst, to bear off Miss Hitchener from the  
 enemies who now compassed her around.

Perhaps Miss Hitchener discouraged Shelley and Harriet in  
 this enterprise, which certainly was not carried into effect. On  
 a day late in June the travellers saw the last of Cwm Elan,  
 and journeyed south towards Chepstow, with which they were  
 already, as it were, connected by the waters of the Wye. But  
 after the wild loveliness of Cwm Elan and Nantgwillt, the  
 scenery of Chepstow, exquisite though it be, seemed tame and  
 uninteresting. The cottage was unfinished, and unfit for the  
 reception of tenants; besides, it was too small for their re-  
 quirements. Accordingly they decided to carry out their  
 original intention of visiting Ilfracombe; and, perhaps crossing  
 the Severn by the Beachley ferry, they made their way  
 through Somerset, with its leafy lanes, to the coast of North

CHAP. VI. Devon. Descending on foot or horseback the precipitous path—hardly then a road—which dropped from Countisbury westwards, and drew towards the sea, they saw before and beneath them a fairy scene—little Lynmouth, then some thirty cottages, rose-clad and myrtle-clad, nestling at the foot of the hills. It was enough. Why should they wander farther, if by good fortune one of these straw-thatched cottages might be theirs ?

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And by good fortune one—and only one—was to be had. Before it lay the summer sea ; behind rose the summer hills, broken into coombes, through which the twin streams, which give its name to the village, leaped and foamed and flashed, or coiled in quiet pools amid a landscape of sylvan loveliness. Even after Keswick and the romantic scenery near Rhayader, Lynmouth lost in their eyes none of its grandeur or grace.\* Within an easy distance was the Valley of Rocks, which Southey had visited in 1799, and found only inferior to the Arrabida and Cintra. In contrast with the miniature community of the small fishing village, with its bowery cottages, and quay and rustic bridge, here were solitude and desolation, broken only by the hawk or kite on wing above those fantastic spires and columns and giant buttresses of rock, which had been likened by Southey to a ruined and deserted city of the Anakim. “Shelley often expressed to me,” wrote Hogg, “the most lively admiration of the Valley of Rocks . . . and this picturesque valley made an indelible impression upon his memory. It was not less lasting than forcible, for during the whole of his too brief life, even until its disastrous and too early termination, it was his habit to sketch or scrawl, almost unconsciously, with his pen upon the fly-leaves of books, on the backs of letters, and in note-books, and occasionally even

\* The house occupied by Shelley has been pulled down and another is built on the site. The precise spot was pointed out by Mary Blackmore, adopted daughter of Shelley's landlady, to Miss Blind. “It is,” Miss Blind writes to me, “at Lynmouth, not Lynton, not touching the river, but some way back on the other side of the road.” Mrs. Blackmore had a vivid recollection of Shelley.

upon the wall or wainscot, points, spires, and pinnacles of CHAP. VI.  
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1812. rocks and crags as recollections and memorials of the fascinating spot." "This place is beautiful," Shelley wrote to Godwin soon after his arrival at Lynmouth. "It equals—Harriet says it exceeds—Nantgwillt. Mountains certainly of not less perpendicular elevation than a thousand feet are broken abruptly into valleys of indescribable fertility and grandeur. The climate is so mild that myrtles of an immense size twine up our cottage, and roses blow in the open air in winter. In addition to these is the sea, which dashes against a rocky and caverned shore, presenting an ever-changing view. All 'shows of sky and earth, of sea and valley,' are here." \*

By the end of June Shelley and his household were settled in Mrs. Hooper's lodgings at Lynmouth.† The rooms were tiny, but their number in some degree compensated their size. One was already assigned, in delighted anticipation, to Miss Hitchener: might not Godwin and his wife and daughters occupy the others? But while Shelley's pen was running on to the invitation, Harriet interposed—the rooms were no better than servants' rooms, the beds were coarse as those of peasants, and Godwin's health was delicate; better wait until they should own a house in London, when their friend of Skinner Street and his family might come and live with them for ever. Meanwhile could not Fanny Godwin—the daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft by her first husband, Imlay—be persuaded to visit them at Lynmouth? If their venerated friend, knowing what to expect, chose to accompany her, their happiness would be thereby enhanced; but he should be prepared for a republican plainness of living. On Fanny's behalf Godwin declined the invitation—he must make their personal

\* July 5, 1812.

† Certainly by June 30; probably by June 25 or 26. The doubling of names in Shelley's biography is somewhat confusing. A Mr. Hooper owned the house at Nantgwillt. A London Stockdale published for Shelley, and now his manuscripts were in the hands of an Irish printer, Stockdale. Mr. Eton owned the Chepstow cottage, and at this time Shelley was writing in defence of Mr. D. I. Eaton.

CHAP. VI. acquaintance before his daughter could be their guest; an idle  
 Feb.-Aug. 1812. excuse—so thought Shelley and Harriet—for were they not perfectly acquainted with the author of “Political Justice,” although they had never beheld his face? But from Godwin that might well be borne which, coming from another, would have been occasion of offence. If the good Harriet was hurt because her kind proposal had been rejected, Shelley at least would think no ill of his spiritual father. For Godwin, on receiving Shelley’s submission to his counsel against continuing the Irish campaign, had indeed taken the young disciple to his heart. “I can now look upon you as a friend,” Godwin had written on March 30; “before, I knew not what might happen. It was like making an acquaintance with Robert Emmet, who, I believe, like yourself, was a man of very pure mind, but respecting whom I could not have told, from day to day, what calamities he might bring upon his country. . . . Now I can look on you, not as a meteor, ephemeral, but as a lasting friend, who, according to the course of nature, may contribute to the comfort of my closing days.”\*

Shelley, though only half convinced by Godwin’s reasonings, and still cherishing his scheme of associations, was moved by the fatherly warmth of the elder and wiser man. He had been too precipitate and impatient; he would try to cultivate that mild and equable benevolence commended by Godwin. “I should regard it as my greatest glory,” he wrote (June 11), “should I be judged worthy to solace your declining years; it is a pleasure the realization of which I anticipate with confident hopes, and which it shall be my study to deserve. I will endeavour to subdue the impatience of my nature, so incompatible with true benevolence.” To temper Shelley’s revolutionary zeal, Godwin had tried to win him to the study of history, and hoped that the age of chivalry, by its heroic

\* This letter did not reach Shelley, who left Dublin on April 4, until some time after his arrival at Nantgwilt.

ideals and charm for the imagination, might attract him and bind him in loyalty to the past; and Shelley was at least docile in disposition. "I yet know little of the chivalric age. The ancient romances, in which are depicted the manners of those times, never fell in my way. I have read Southey's 'Amadis of Gaul' and 'Palmerin of England,' but at a time when I was little disposed to philosophize on the manners they describe. I have also read his 'Chronicle of the Cid.' It is written in a simple and impressive style, and surprised me by the extent of accurate reading evinced by the references. But I read it hastily, and it did not please me so much as it will on a reperusal seasoned by your authority and opinion."\*

A little later, sharing some of his wife's and daughters' surprise and disappointment that Shelley had not settled in the house which they had recommended at Chepstow, Godwin took it upon him to read his young friend a lecture, mildly severe, on the duty of a plain, philosophic, republican way of life, and the wickedness of pampering selfish whims or accumulating personal luxuries. For all that Godwin knew, the Chepstow house might indeed be "of the dimensions of a pigsty." "Nor is it my habit," he added, "to reason directly to a particular case; the bent of my mind's eye is always towards a general principle." The right to belabour one's unoffending neighbour with a general principle is a personal luxury reserved for vexed philosophers. With admirable temper and the grace of perfect manners, Shelley replied. A letter already on its way would explain to Godwin that he was trying to live modestly on a modest income, rather than burden his patrimony by raising money on his expectations, and that if he was an heir "panting for twenty-one," his hopes and desires were of no selfish kind. "My letter, dated the 5th, will prove to you that it is *not* to live in splendour, which I hate; *not* to accumulate indulgences, which I despise, ~~that~~ my present conduct was adopted." His Lynmouth cottage

\* June 11, 1812.



CHAP. VI. was no home of luxury; it was more like a peasant's dwelling. Feb.-Aug. 1812. Were he to work at the loom, or his wife engage in culinary business, would that add to their usefulness? Against the Chepstow house there was the invincible objection of scarcity of room, and until society be greatly altered or wholly regenerated, delicacy forbids that human beings of different sexes should crowd into the same apartment. "See my defence. Yet, my esteemed and venerated friend, accept my thanks; consider yourself as yet more beloved by me for the manner in which you have reproved my suppositious errors, and ever may you, like the tenderest and wisest of parents, be on the watch to detect those traits of vice which, yet undiscovered, are marked on the tablet of my character, so that I pursue undeviatingly the path which you first cleared through the wilderness of life." \* Godwin's young disciple would seem to have gained already some of that mild and equable benevolence which his counsellor had recommended, and to have found unexpected occasion for putting it to use.

The Lynmouth cottagers were now eagerly expecting the arrival of Miss Hitchener. Shelley had bespoken for her a kind reception from William Godwin, as she passed through London on her way to Devon. "[July 5.] Though deriving her birth from a very humble source, she contracted during youth a very deep and refined habit of thinking; her mind, naturally inquisitive and penetrating, overstepped the bounds of prejudice; she formed for herself an unbeaten path of life. . . . She concealed not the uncommon modes of thinking which she had adopted, and publicly instructed youth as a Deist and a Republican.† When I first knew her, she had not read 'Political Justice,' yet her life appeared to me in a great degree modelled upon its precepts." So introduced, Miss Hitchener was kindly received by Godwin. On July 14

\* Lynmouth, July 7, 1812.

† This was probably an error on Shelley's part, for Miss Hitchener would have called herself, if required to name her creed, a Christian.

she supped and slept at his house; next morning she took her leave, bearing a letter from him to Shelley, and, after a brief interval of time, her presence must have irradiated the rose and myrtle embowered cottage by the sea. "I have much to talk to you about," wrote Shelley, in anticipation of her arrival—"innate passions, God, Christianity, etc." And when the tall, dark, thin, foreign-looking lady, with the long black hair and Roman features, had recovered from her fatigue, doubtless there were eager and eloquent debates on things terrestrial and things celestial. What she thought concerning innate passions we are left to conjecture; but we know that she brought her friends interesting, yet not wholly satisfactory news of William Godwin, who had seemed to her to regard himself with too fond an admiration, and who held himself strangely aloof from his own domestic circle. It was agreed between the ladies that the name "Portia" should be dropped, and the simpler "Bessy" take its place; and soon Bessy, when not talking, or laughing, or languishing, was eagerly engaged in reading Shelley's manuscript passages from Irish history, or writing at his instigation in the service of humanity.

These days of July and August which went by on the Devon coast were probably among the happiest days of Shelley's early life. His love for Harriet was ardent and unmarred by fleck or flaw; in his relations with Miss Hitchener he had not yet passed from enthusiasm to disillusion; welcome letters arrived now and again from Godwin; parcels of books, to be read and discussed with Bessy, were ordered from London; and Shelley's mind was vigorously occupied with a new prose pleading on behalf of liberty of speech, and with enterprises of pith and moment in English verse.

"How happily the days  
Of Thalaba went by!"

"You must know," Shelley had written from Dublin to

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CHAP. VI. Godwin, "that I either am, or fancy myself, something of a poet." But, although he had placed the manuscript for a volume of verse in the hands of the Dublin printer, Stockdale, and looked forward with interest to its publication, it does not appear that his residence in the Irish capital produced much beside the prose pamphlets. We can well believe that amid the political excitement and social misery which surrounded him in Dublin, where he feared lest the throng of demands upon his charity should render him callous to the contemplation of wretchedness, Shelley was not often in the mood for singing. At Nantgwillt, in wooded glen or mountain solitude, or in the company of voiceful streams, the poet cast off his nightmare and awoke. Besides "The Retrospect," already noticed, several unpublished pieces would seem to have been inspired by the beauty, not untouched by awe and terror, of wild Wales.\* The poetical mood was not likely to pass away when Shelley found himself at Lynmouth, still amid hills and rushing brooks, and now in presence of the ever-changing sea. It was certainly at Lynmouth, and in August, 1812, that Shelley, stirred to creation by the mystery and music of the waves, wrote a fragment of some three hundred lines—still in manuscript—entitled "The Voyage." It tells, in the irregular unrhymed verse, which Shelley adopted from "Thalaba" and employed in "Queen Mab," of a ship returning across the summer sea from her voyage; and of her company of voyagers, with their various passions and imaginings—two ardent youths who have braved all dangers side by side; the landsman mean and crafty, who bears across the stainless ocean all the base thoughts and selfish greeds of the city; the sailor, returning to his cottage-home, and wife and babes, but seized at the moment of his dearest hope by minions of the press-gang and hurried away reluctant.†

\* Some of these, however, may belong to Shelley's visit in 1811.

† "The Voyage," like "Queen Mab," passes before its close from the unrhymed Southern verse into blank verse.

Here also on the Devon coast was probably written "A Retrospect of Times of Old"—a rhymed piece, also unpublished, having much in common with those earlier pages of "Queen Mab," which picture the fall of empires, and celebrate the oblivion that has overtaken the old rulers of men and lords of the earth. Now, too, Shelley was actually engaged on "Queen Mab." Whether or not it had been conceived long before, we cannot for certain tell; at Nantgwillt, Cwm Elan, and Lynmouth it probably began to take its present shape.\* In form "Queen Mab" agrees with "The Voyage;" in substance it has kinship with "A Retrospect of Times of Old." It possesses a visionary largeness which corresponds with the mood into which the sea and the mountain solitudes had lifted Shelley's spirit. It is a kind of synthesis which harmonizes the political and social fervours of the Irish expedition, with all their wisdom and unwisdom, and the imaginative exaltation to which the grandeur and loveliness of Welsh hillsides and the Devon cliffs and waves had given rise. "I enclose also," wrote Shelley from Lynmouth, on August 18, to a new acquaintance, Mr. Thomas Hookham, the publisher, "by way of specimen, all that I have written of a little poem begun since my arrival in England. I conceive I have matter enough for six more cantos. You will perceive that I have not attempted to temper my constitutional enthusiasm in that poem. Indeed, a poem is safe; the iron-souled Attorney-General would scarcely dare to attack 'genus irritabile vatum.' The Past, the Present, and the Future are the grand and comprehensive topics of this poem. I have not yet half exhausted the second of them." Who can doubt that the poem here spoken of is "Queen Mab"—a continuation, as it were, of the series of pamphlets—a pamphlet

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\* Medwin ("Life of Shelley," vol. i. p. 153) states that "Queen Mab" was begun towards the close of 1809, and soon after his expulsion from Oxford was converted from a "mere imaginative poem into a systematic attack on the institutions of society." Both Shelley and Mrs. Shelley spoke of "Queen Mab" as having been written when he was eighteen.

CHAP. VI. in verse, but at the same time a poem, with some of the  
 Feb.-Aug. 1812. beauty of rock and wave and sky at work through and below  
 its declamatory prophesyings?

Among the strange books which Shelley had lately read was Sir James Lawrence's "Empire of the Nairs," which convinced him, if any doubts yet remained, that marriage is essentially an evil. Having borrowed through Hookham a copy of Lawrence's poem, "Love, an Allegory," he wrote to the author, and confessing that he had submitted for his wife's sake to the bondage of the marriage ceremony, added a graceful acknowledgment of his happiness: "I am a young man not yet of age, and have now been married a year to a woman younger than myself. Love seems inclined to stay in the prison." On the first of August came round Harriet's birthday, and Shelley addressed to her a birthday sonnet, confidently expecting for her a future of ardent love and pure thoughts like those of the present, however age might dim the light of her eyes or change her bright tresses to gray.

"Ever as now with Love and Virtue's glow  
 May thy unwithering soul not cease to burn,  
 Still may thine heart with those pure thoughts o'erflow  
 Which force from mine such quick and warm return." \*

There is a pure fervour of boyish love, touched with manly thought and tenderness, in the longer blank-verse poem "To Harriet," which probably belongs to this date, and which, excepting two short fragments, has remained hitherto unprinted.†

#### TO HARRIET.

It is not blasphemy to hope that Heaven  
 More perfectly will give those nameless joys  
 Which throb within the pulses of the blood

\* The original of this sonnet, still unpublished, is in Mr. Esdaile's possession.

† One of these fragments was printed from Mr. Garnett's transcript of a Boscombe manuscript (ed. Forman, vol. iv. p. 359); the other is given by Shelley in a note to "Queen Mab" (ed. Forman, vol. iv. p. 518). The original of the complete poem is in Mr. Esdaile's possession.

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And sweeten all that bitterness which Earth  
 Infuses in the heaven-born soul. O thou  
 Whose dear love gleamed upon the gloomy path  
 Which this lone spirit travelled, drear and cold,  
 Yet swiftly leading to those awful limits  
 Which mark the bounds of time and of the space  
 When Time shall be no more; wilt thou not turn  
 Those spirit-beaming eyes and look on me,  
 Until I be assured that Earth is Heaven  
 And Heaven is Earth?—will not thy glowing cheek,  
 Glowing with soft suffusion, rest on mine,  
 And breathe magnetic sweetness thro' the frame  
 Of my corporeal nature, thro' the soul  
 Now knit with these fine fibres? I would give  
 The longest and the happiest day that fate  
 Has marked on my existence but to feel  
 One soul-reviving kiss. . . . O thou most dear,  
 'Tis an assurance that this Earth is Heaven,  
 And Heaven the flower of that untainted seed  
 Which springeth here beneath such love as ours.  
 Harriet! let death all mortal ties dissolve,  
 But ours shall not be mortal! The cold hand  
 Of Time may chill the love of earthly minds  
 Half frozen now; the frigid intercourse  
 Of common souls lives but a summer's day;  
 It dies, where it arose, upon this earth.  
 But ours! oh, 'tis the stretch of fancy's hope  
 To portray its continuance as now,  
 Warm, tranquil, spirit-healing; nor when age  
 Has tempered these wild extasies, and given  
 A soberer tinge to the luxurious glow  
 Which blazing on devotion's pinnacle  
 Makes virtuous passion supersede the power  
 Of reason; nor when life's æstival sun  
 To deeper manhood shall have ripened me;  
 Nor when some years have added judgment's store  
 To all thy woman sweetness, all the fire  
 Which throbs in thine enthusiast heart; not then  
 Shall holy friendship (for what other name  
 May love like ours assume?), not even then

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Shall custom so corrupt, or the cold forms  
 Of this desolate world so harden us,  
 As when we think of the dear love that binds  
 Our souls in soft communion, while we know  
 Each other's thoughts and feelings, can we say  
 Unblushingly a heartless compliment,  
 Praise, hate, or love with the unthinking world,  
 Or dare to cut the unrelaxing nerve  
 That knits our love to Virtue. Can those eyes,  
 Beaming with mildest radiance on my heart  
 To purify its purity, e'er bend  
 To soothe its vice or consecrate its fears?  
 Never, thou second self! Is confidence  
 So vain in virtue that I learn to doubt  
 The mirror even of Truth? Dark flood of Time,  
 Roll as it listeth thee; I measure not  
 By months or moments thy ambiguous course.  
 Another may stand by me on thy brink  
 And watch the bubble whirled beyond his ken,  
 Which pauses at my feet. The sense of love,  
 The thirst for action, and the impassioned thought  
 Prolong my being; if I wake no more,  
 My life more actual living will contain  
 Than some grey veterans of the world's cold school,  
 Whose listless hours unprofitably roll  
 By one enthusiast feeling unredeemed.  
 Virtue and Love! unbending Fortitude,  
 Freedom, Devotedness, and Purity!  
 That life my spirit consecrates to you." \*

Shelley's private happiness did not dull his sensibility to the wrongs and sorrows of the world. Of all those "rights of man" of which his broadsheet "Declaration" spoke, he pro-

\* In Mr. Esdaille's manuscript book this poem immediately precedes the Sonnet to Harriet on August 1, 1812. The reader cannot fail to note that this poem contains several reminiscences of Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," which it resembles in the general treatment of the blank verse. It occurs to me as possible that, in passing through Chepstow, Shelley may have visited Tintern Abbey, and have read Wordsworth's poem, and that this may have been written soon after reaching Lynmouth. Undoubtedly he had read the "Lyrical Ballads" at Keswick.

bably valued most highly the right to freedom of thought and speech. In March, 1812, Daniel Isaac Eaton, a bookseller of Ave Maria Lane, was prosecuted in the Court of King's Bench for publishing, at his "Ratiocinatory, or Magazine for Truth and Good Sense," a blasphemous and profane libel on the Holy Scriptures, entitled "The Age of Reason: Part the Third. By Thomas Paine." \* The jury, guided by a vigorous charge from Lord Ellenborough, did not long delay in finding Eaton guilty, and he was sentenced on May 8 to eighteen months' imprisonment in Newgate, and during the first month to stand in the pillory for an hour in the Old Bailey. On May 26, amid the waving of hats and cheering of the crowd, Eaton, a man upwards of sixty years of age, underwent his public punishment, and not a voice or arm was raised against him. Popular sentiment had outrun the law, and whether it was in sympathy with Tom Paine's audacities or not, condemned the last relic of the fire-and-fagot system of suppressing heresy. "What do you think of Eaton's trial and sentence?" asked Shelley, while a visitor at Cwm Elan in the early days of June, of William Godwin. "I do not mean to insinuate that this poor bookseller has any characteristics in common with Socrates or Jesus Christ; still the spirit which pillories and imprisons him is the same which brought them to an untimely end; still, even in this enlightened age, the moralist and reformer may expect coercion analogous to that used with the humble yet zealous imitator of their endeavours. I have thought of addressing the public on the subject, and, indeed, have begun an outline of the address. May I be favoured with your remarks on it before I send it to the world?" We are not aware that Godwin offered his assistance or countenance to the young advocate of a doctrine which he had himself defended in a chapter of "Political Justice." In the solitude of Lyn-

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\* Eaton was a man of some education. In 1810 he published his own translation of a posthumous work by Helvétius, "The True Sense and Meaning of the System of Nature."



CHAP. VI. mouth, perhaps with Miss Hitchener as sympathetic listener to the pleading, "A Letter to Lord Ellenborough" was completed, and Shelley entrusted his manuscript to Mr. Syle, a well-known printer and bookseller of Barnstaple, the little metropolis of North Devon, distant some eighteen miles from Lynton. It is said that Shelley ordered a thousand copies to be printed, and that the printer, taking alarm at an incident presently to be related, after perhaps a tenth of this number had been delivered into the author's hands, suppressed and destroyed the remaining sheets.

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The "Letter to Lord Ellenborough," written before Shelley was twenty years old, has none of the majestic force of Milton's speech on behalf of liberty of unlicensed printing, in which the adult passion of a thinker informs and animates the argument; but it has clearness and vigour, and is certainly superior in style to anything which Shelley had previously written. It was legal, Shelley admits, that Mr. Eaton should suffer punishment because he denied the divinity and resurrection of Jesus Christ; it may even have been politic; but was it just? was it moral? was it in accordance with the principles of reason, or even with the teaching of Jesus Christ himself? "If the law 'de heretico comburendo' has not been formally repealed," wrote Shelley, "I conceive that, from the promise held out by your lordship's zeal, we need not despair of beholding the flames of persecution rekindled in Smithfield. Even now the lash that drove Descartes and Voltaire from their native country, the chains which bound Galileo, the flames which burned Vanini, again resound. And where? In a nation that presumptuously calls itself the sanctuary of freedom. Under a government which, whilst it infringes the very right of thought and speech, boasts of permitting the liberty of the press; in a civilized and enlightened country a man is pilloried and imprisoned because he is a Deist, and no one raises his voice in the indignation of outraged humanity." A youth of nineteen, far from the world and the haunts of men, felt that

he, if no one else, must raise an indignant voice. He would CHAP. VI.  
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1812. gladly, he declared, have been spared "the perilous pleasure of becoming the champion of an innocent man," had some fitter pen than his own undertaken the task imposed upon him; he had waited four months expectant, and dared not longer remain silent.

By July 29 Shelley had received the pamphlet from his printer, for on that day he forwarded twenty-five copies to his acquaintance in Old Bond Street, Thomas Hookham; a parcel of fifty copies followed the twenty-five on August 18; and single copies were despatched to Lord Sidmouth, Sir Francis Burdett, and some private friends of the author. "I beg you to accept of them," Shelley wrote to Hookham (July 29), "that you may show them to any friends who *are not informers*. I shall not persist in my intention of procuring a publisher. Possessing the knowledge I now possess, it would be unjust in me to attempt to draw upon any one the indignation of bigotry and despotism. I have changed, therefore, my former plan to that of gratuitous distribution. In case that you could dispose of more than those which I now send, I beg that you will not hesitate a moment in informing me. I have several works, some unfinished, some yet only in contemplation; they are principally in the form of poems or essays. As soon as any one of them is completed I will send it to you, and shall take it as an additional favour if you can, consistently with safety, publish it. I have received the parcel safe. I would thank you to send in addition Milton's Prose Works, 'Elements of Chemical Philosophy,' by Sir H. Davy (to be published August 1), 'Medical Extracts,' Hartley 'On Man,' 'Rights of Woman,' by Mary Wollstonecraft." \*

Shelley was eagerly desirous to impress his opinions on others, and at the same time, bearing in mind Eaton's pillory

\* Perhaps Shelley's defence of Eaton had interested him in Milton's "Areopagitica."

CHAP. VI. and imprisonment, was apprehensive of drawing down a prosecution on any over-hardy publisher who should venture to set forth his dangerous wares. These were now accumulating on his hands. Copies of the Irish pamphlets were in his possession, copies of the "Letter to Lord Ellenborough," copies of the broadside "Declaration of Rights," and copies of a broadside ballad entitled "The Devil's Walk"—a satire on Church and State, poor in verse and poor in wit, modelled on that well-known piece in which Southey and Coleridge had laid their heads together, and which, in one of its forms, bore the same title as Shelley's extravaganza. This last had been composed in Dublin, and was perhaps printed by the obliging Mr. Syle, of Barnstaple. In 1871 old Mrs. Blackmore, niece to Shelley's Lynmouth landlady, remembered that the young gentleman had a number of papers printed at Barnstaple, and "when they came home," said she, "he had me to cut the printer's name off," for why should Mr. Syle suffer on his account? \* It was certainly inconvenient to be in possession of so much "inflammable matter," as Harriet had termed it, now accumulating in certain heavy chests, and yet to find it so difficult to inflame the world, or even one small fishing-village of Devon. But the author of these papers was a poet, and could negotiate with higher powers than those of Paternoster Row or Old Bond Street. The winds and the waves were publishers against whom no Attorney-General could file an information; even my lord Ellenborough could not condemn the summer gales, or the surge and rollers of the Atlantic, to pillory and imprisonment. Already, as an Eton schoolboy, Shelley had learnt how to send a fire-balloon on its errand to the sky; lately, at Nantgwilt, he had delighted in sailing his rough toy-boat upon the mountain-stream. Why should not a fire-balloon be the emissary of freedom, and bear a "Declaration of Rights" or a "Devil's Walk" across the midnight sky, to be found next

\* Miss Blind ascertained this and other facts from Mrs. Blackmore, then aged eighty-two, in the year 1871.

morning, perhaps, by some Welsh husbandman or Devon milk-  
 maid in field or farmyard? The "Devil" would also submit  
 to be bottled, like the Arabian Afreet in the jar, and might  
 float away on the August waves, possibly to be drawn to shore  
 in the net of some unsuspecting fisherman or coastguard need-  
 ing illumination. For the more important "Declaration of  
 Rights" there might be constructed a little box, covered with  
 bladder, well resined and waxed to keep out the water, with  
 lead below to maintain it in an upright position, and a tiny  
 mast and sail above to attract attention at sea. Thus fitted  
 out, his craft might sail to unknown coasts—might catch the  
 eye of some patriot on the Irish shore, or might be drawn on  
 board some passing vessel, to sustain and encourage that  
 generosity and love of freedom commonly found among sea-  
 faring men in trading brigs, or to startle the crew of some  
 king's ship from the apathy of their servitude.\* Accordingly,  
 we discover Shelley—a boyish figure—in the August days,  
 alone or accompanied by a tall, foreign-looking female (taken  
 by some for a maidservant), on the Lynmouth beach, pushing  
 certain small boxes, each with its mast and sail, from the rocks;  
 or watching from his boat a little flotilla of dark green bottles,  
 tightly corked, which rise and sink as the waves sway them  
 seawards. Or we see him in the twilight launching his fiery  
 craft, laden with truth and virtue, into the evening air. On  
 returning to the myrtle-embowered cottage from such adven-  
 tures as these, Shelley would speed his envoys forward on  
 their mission with the breath of good wishes winged by  
 song.†

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\* In a note to his poem, "The Voyage," Shelley speaks of the purer generosity and more engaging frankness found in small trading vessels than those of the seamen in the Royal Navy.

† I print the following sonnets for the first time, by Mr. Esdaile's kind permission.

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## SONNET.

## TO A BALLOON LADEN WITH KNOWLEDGE.

Bright ball of flame that thro' the gloom of even  
 Silently takest thine ethereal way,  
 And with surpassing glory dimm'st each ray  
 Twinkling amid the dark blue depths of Heaven,—  
 Unlike the fire thou bearest, soon shalt thou  
 Fade like a meteor in surrounding gloom,  
 Whilst that unquenchable is doomed to glow  
 A watch-light by the patriot's lonely tomb;  
 A ray of courage to the opprest and poor;  
 A spark, though gleaming on the hovel's hearth,  
 Which through the tyrant's gilded domes shall roar;  
 A beacon in the darkness of the Earth;  
 A sun which, o'er the renovated scene,  
 Shall dart like Truth where Falsehood yet has been.

## SONNET.

ON LAUNCHING SOME BOTTLES FILLED WITH KNOWLEDGE INTO  
THE BRISTOL CHANNEL.

Vessels of heavenly medicine! may the breeze  
 Auspicious waft your dark green forms to shore;  
 Safe may ye stem the wide surrounding roar  
 Of the wild whirlwinds and the raging seas;  
 And oh! if Liberty e'er deigned to stoop  
 From yonder lowly throne her crownless brow,  
 Sure she will breathe around your emerald group  
 The fairest breezes of her west that blow.  
 Yes! she will waft ye to some freeborn soul  
 Whose eye-beam kindling as it meets your freight,  
 Her heaven-born flame in suffering Earth will light,  
 Until Its radiance gleams from pole to pole,  
 And tyrant-hearts with powerless envy burst  
 To see their night of ignorance dispersed.

Sea and air had been invaded by Shelley's envoys, and the  
 element of fire was his servant; it remained to operate some-

how on this solid earth. Might it not be possible to send the CHAP. VI.  
 "Declaration of Rights" from hand to hand among the inhabi- Feb.-Aug.  
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 tants of Devonshire, or to exhibit the broadside in some public  
 place where all might read? The "Declaration," Shelley had  
 written from Nantgwilt to Miss Hitchener, "would be useful  
 in farmhouses; it was by a similar expedient that Franklin  
 promulgated his commercial opinions among the Americans."\*  
 Best of all it would be if North Devon could be attacked at  
 its heart and centre—Barnstaple. And happily Shelley had  
 by his side an ally and minister, less radiant and spiritual  
 than the genius of fire, but better suited for operating in the  
 streets of a country town. One treasure Shelley had brought  
 with him from Dublin to Wales, and had never since relin-  
 quished—an honest, blundering Irishman; short, thick-set, and  
 hard-featured. It was Dan Healey,† who, to enhance the  
 fame of his young master's political achievements, had given  
 out in Dublin that he was but fifteen years old; it was  
 blundering Dan who had despatched Shelley's packets, con-  
 taining pamphlets to be forwarded to Godwin and Miss  
 Hitchener, by post instead of by coach, thereby causing the  
 impecunious philosopher to pay a charge of £1 1s. 8d., for  
 which injury his young friend duly received a mild rebuke.  
 Dan was warmly attached to his master—ready, he declared,  
 "to go through fire and water" for Shelley. For his part  
 Shelley, though bearing a friendly feeling to Dan, found him  
 somewhat of a superfluity at Lynmouth; it was difficult to  
 make him useful; he was certainly not ornamental. Shelley  
 feared that he must part with Dan; then, as if to discover a  
 use for him, thought of sending him to Dublin to look after  
 the poems in Stockdale's hands. Now, however, the Irish-  
 man's opportunity had come; he was to wake and find him-

\* Postmark April 18, 1812.

† I accept Mrs. Blackmore's recollection of the name—Healey, not Hill—as likely to be right, and suppose that Dan gave an assumed name, resembling the true one, when arrested.

CHAP. VI. self famous, at least in Barnstaple, and was to be heard of  
Feb.-Aug. 1812. even by high officials of the state.

On the evening of Wednesday, August 19, a man was observed distributing and posting up certain papers about Barnstaple—papers which bore the heading “Declaration of Rights,” and began with the formidable words, “Government has no rights.” It was felt in Barnstaple that if Government has no rights it has at least duties, and one obvious duty was to arrest this sower of sedition. On being brought before the mayor the prisoner stated that his name was Daniel Hill (why should Dan bring the honourable family of Healey to shame before the Sassenach?), and that he was servant to P. B. Shelley, Esq., now residing at Lynmouth. Asked how he became possessed of these seditious papers, Hill replied that on his road from Lynton he had met a gentleman in black who begged him to take the papers to Barnstaple and post and distribute them, the unknown gentleman giving him five shillings for his trouble. As for himself, Hill did not know how to read, and was ignorant of the deadly contents of the documents of which he was the bearer.\* Not satisfied with Dan’s story of the gentleman in black, the mayor made inquiries about the man’s master, and learnt that Mr. Shelley was viewed with suspicion at Lynmouth and Lynton on the ground of his unusually large correspondence. Who but a conspirator could want to write sixteen letters of a day, including one addressed to that notorious patron of the discontented, Sir Francis Burdett? Moreover, Mr. Shelley had been frequently observed to drop bottles into the sea, and once was watched while wading, bottle in hand, into the water, on which occasion his consignment to the waves had drifted to shore, and, being captured, was found to be as full of sedition as an egg is of meat. Thus fortified in his ill

\* I infer that Dan made this last statement from his conduct on Shelley’s coming to Barnstaple to obtain his discharge, as related by Mrs. Blackmore (see the next note).

opinion, the loyal mayor of Barnstaple made haste to convict CHAP. VI.  
 honest Daniel in ten penalties of twenty pounds each, for Feb.-Aug. 1812.  
 publishing and dispersing printed papers without the printer's  
 name affixed ; in lieu of payment, the prisoner should undergo  
 confinement for six months in the common gaol of the borough.  
 On the day after Healey's arrest Shelley arrived from Lyn-  
 mouth to look after his servant, and if possible obtain his  
 discharge. To pay such a sum as two hundred pounds for  
 Dan's freedom was not in his master's power, but it was  
 arranged that for a weekly fee of fifteen shillings the prisoner  
 should be granted certain immunities and privileges, and this  
 provision for his relief Shelley was prepared to make.\*

These important events formed the subject of communica-  
 tions between the town-clerk of Barnstaple and Lord Sidmouth,  
 then Secretary of State for the Home Department ; and again  
 between the Barnstable post-master, the secretary of the Post  
 Office, and the Earl of Chichester, joint Postmaster-General  
 with the Earl of Sandwich. Lord Chichester had already  
 some acquaintance with the "Declaration of Rights," for a copy  
 had been forwarded to him from Holyhead in April, when the  
 chest of papers addressed from Dublin to Miss Hitchenner had  
 there been opened by the surveyor of customs. At his seat  
 in Sussex—Stanmer Park—he had heard of Mr. Timothy  
 Shelley's troubles with his son ; and he shook his head over  
 the young man who was disgracing his family. The Home  
 Secretary was informed that the connection between Shelley  
 and the seditious bill-posting had now been clearly established,  
 for a small box as well as a bottle had been drawn at Lyn-  
 mouth from the sea, and each was discovered to contain one of  
 the two papers—"Declaration" and "Devil's Walk"—found  
 in Daniel Hill's possession. A legal opinion was sought as to

\* Mrs. Blackmore is the authority for this last statement. She told how, when Shelley visited Dan Healey in prison on the day after his arrest, Dan repeated (probably in the presence of witnesses) the story of the gentleman who met him and gave him the papers. "Mr. Shelley asked him how he came to be so foolish, and gave him one of the papers to read, and he held it upside down."



CHAP. VI. whether any steps could with propriety be taken against Mr. Percy Shelley in consequence of his "very extraordinary and unaccountable conduct," with the result that no prosecution was advised, but it was recommended that some person should be instructed to observe his future behaviour, and to transmit any information respecting him to head-quarters; to which effect instructions were sent to the mayor of Barnstaple. Thus Mr. Percy Shelley, though unmolested by a paternal government, was placed under observation, and perhaps for some time, as he moved hither and thither, was provided in each locality with an attendant in the person of a spy.\*

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In these August days Shelley doubtless had a feeling that there was thunder in the upper regions, and that the air might at any moment begin to hurtle about his head. The quiet happiness of the Lynmouth cottage was over and gone. Shelley had loved to stand on the slope before his door, engaged in the delightful pastime of blowing soap-bubbles, and would watch the gleaming ærial voyagers until they suddenly broke and vanished. The radiant summer hours seemed to have disappeared like so many bright bubbles borne away. He was impatient to be gone from Devon, and to find a refuge across the British Channel, somewhere in his beloved Wales, possibly northwards in the Vale of Llangollen, where, before these Barnstaple troubles, he had planned to make his abode at least for the coming winter. It was Shelley's design to sail from Lynmouth to Swansea, a distance of about twenty-five miles, but the winds of heaven refused to aid his flight. He breathed his longing for "the south's benign and balmy breeze" in a sonnet, which signed, as it were, a farewell to the wilds of North Devon—

"Where man's profane and tainting hand  
Nature's primeval loveliness has marred,

\* For the preceding story of Shelley's troubles at Lynmouth I am mainly indebted to Mr. W. M. Rossetti's article, "Shelley in 1812-13," *Fortnightly Review*, January, 1871.

And some few souls of the high bliss debarred  
Which else obey her powerful command ;”

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at the same time hailing from afar the

“Mountain piles

That load in grandeur Cambria's emerald vales.”\*

Still, however, the north wind blew, and he was defeated of his purpose. Unwilling to remain longer at Lynmouth, Shelley, with his household party and Miss Hitchener, towards the close of August, some ten days after his servant's arrest, journeyed to Ilfracombe, and thence with little or no delay passed over to Swansea.†

A few days later the town-clerk of Barnstaple, who bore the name of an elder Devonian hero—Drake—and like him was zealous in his country's cause, proceeded to Lynmouth to obtain further information for Government respecting Mr. Shelley. But Mr. Shelley was nowhere to be found ; he had vanished, he and his grand armada of bottles and boxes, and his large chests supposed to contain sedition, and so heavy that scarcely three men could lift them—a marvel to the village ; for the Lynmouth fishermen probably had had few previous opportunities of estimating the weight of Milton's Prose Works, Hartley on Man, Davy on Chemistry, together with a hundredweight or two of materialistic French philosophers. Henry Drake was not the only visitor to Lynmouth, this September, who was surprised and disappointed to learn that Shelley had flitted beyond his ken. William Godwin, though not much given to running about the world for pleasure, ordinarily refreshed his spirits with an autumn holiday ; and this year the excursion should be to Devonshire, where a meeting between him and his young disciple might take place as affecting as that, in his own novel, between Casimer Fleetwood and the venerable Ruffigny. On the same day on which Drake was reporting to Lord Sidmouth

\* The original of this unprinted sonnet is in Mr. Esdaile's possession.

† The precise date of Shelley's departure is unascertained, but Godwin, writing from Lynmouth on September 19, states that he had then been gone for three weeks.

CHAP. VI. the result of his visit of espionage to Lynmouth, Godwin  
 Feb.-Aug. 1812. started from London for Bristol. Having visited Chepstow  
 and Tintern Abbey, and spent some time with Cottle and  
 other friends in Bristol, he left that city on a windless after-  
 noon, about mid-September, in a small and crazy vessel over-  
 crowded by her fourteen passengers. Tiding it for six hours,  
 and lying at anchor for six, they slowly dropped down the  
 Severn; next morning in a rainy squall, tossed to and fro,  
 and, before night, putting over to the Welsh coast, the travellers  
 found shelter in a roomy barn—a cruel reverse to Godwin,  
 who had looked for welcome and repose in the pleasant Lyn-  
 mouth cottage. It was three or four o'clock on the afternoon  
 of Friday, September 18, when by favour of the captain the  
 weary voyager was put ashore in a small boat at Lynmouth,  
 instead of being taken fifteen miles further, to Ilfracombe.  
 He had eaten nothing since Wednesday's dinner, and had  
 slept but little. There was a moment's trial for his temper  
 when, on landing, he was informed that the Shelleys had flown;  
 but, accepting the situation with as much equanimity as he  
 could command, Godwin was not ill pleased to find his feet on  
 solid earth and to be able to obtain a comfortable dinner. On  
 his return from a solitary ramble to the Valley of Rocks, or  
 perhaps next morning, he found Shelley's landlady, good  
 Mrs. Hooper, and was "delighted" with her. She "quite  
 loved the Shelleys," declares Godwin, in a letter to his wife;  
 and for Godwin himself, in his disappointment, she had some  
 cheering news, assuring him that within a fortnight, that is,  
 early in October, the Shelleys would be in London. "This,"  
 he writes, "quite comforts my heart." \*

\* Godwin's letter is printed by Lady Shelley, "Shelley Memorials," pp. 41, 42;  
 and by Mr. Kegan Paul ("Life of Godwin," ii. pp. 211, 212), who also reprints a  
 portion of Godwin's diary for this period. I may note here that Captain Gronow  
 ("Recollections," etc., 1st and 2nd ser., 1864, p. 155) speaks of a visit of Shelley  
 to Swansea in the year 1810, which perhaps may arise from a confused  
 recollection of this visit of 1812. On his return journey to London Godwin  
 addressed a letter to his wife in which a philosophic attempt is made to soothe  
 her temper by presenting an impartial view of her good qualities as conceived by  
 her husband. So singular a performance ought not to remain in manuscript.

## CHAPTER VII.

TREMADOC: LONDON: IRELAND (SEPTEMBER, 1812—  
APRIL, 1813).

IT seems to have been Shelley's intention, on leaving Devon, to seek for a house in the Vale of Llangollen; then to hasten to London, and after a brief visit to return to Wales, there to spend the winter, and perhaps the greater part of the ensuing year. To this plan, in its general outline, he still adhered; but from Llangollen, where perhaps no suitable house was to be found, he was drawn away by the attractions of sea-shore, mountain, and valley, on the south coast of Carnarvonshire. The little town of Tremadoc, in 1812, was a recent marvel of human contrivance and energy, impressive even amidst the old and greater wonders of Nature in her giant play. Mr. W. Alexander Madocks, member of Parliament for Boston, had conceived the design of rescuing from the sea a large tract of land on the western side of the estuary, known as the "Traeth mawr," or "great sand." \* It was his ambition to execute for the county of Carnarvon that generous project ascribed by Goethe to his Faust in the last and noblest hours of his life, and to look abroad upon a little world of his own creation inhabited by busy and happy human creatures:—

"Within, a land like Paradise; outside,  
E'en to the brink roars the impetuous tide."

\* In the attempt to describe Tremadoc in 1812, I have followed the 1813 edition of Nicholson's "Cambrian Traveller's Guide," and sometimes adopted its phrases. A description substantially identical appears in "The Beauties of England and Wales."

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And Mr. Madocks had gone far towards transforming his idea into reality. By the year 1800 he had reclaimed nearly two thousand acres of excellent land, which soon produced luxuriant crops of barley, wheat, and clover. Tremadoc, named after its founder, rose on this land rescued from the sea—a little town built in quadrangular form, provided with its market-house, assembly-rooms, and church. It was backed by a craggy height, and at a short distance from the town, perched upon a rock amid flourishing young plantations, and standing out from the mountain-buttresses behind, was Mr. Madocks' new villa residence, Tanyrallt, a residence elegant in design and commodious. Encouraged by the success of his first enterprise, the creator of Tremadoc formed a plan to recover some five thousand acres more—the greater part of the drowned lands within the Traeth mawr. A vast embankment was to be constructed from side to side of the estuary. Its length when complete would be nearly a mile; its width could not be less than a hundred feet at the base. Upon the eastern side a turnpike road was to be made, forming a communication between the counties of Carnarvon and Merioneth. By September, 1810, the embankment had been carried from each extremity to within one hundred yards of the centre; but here was the critical point of the whole work, for through this chasm the tide ran with amazing force, and swept away or disturbed the barriers which the workmen had placed to oppose its onset. When Shelley arrived in September, 1812, the embankment was still unfinished; a fortune had been already spent upon it, and just as the great enterprise approached completion—so Shelley was given to understand—Mr. Madocks found it necessary to slacken his efforts to carry it to a successful issue. Charmed by the beauty of the neighbourhood—the encircling mountains, the sea, the valley, with its stream and hanging cliffs, leading upwards to Pont Aberglaslyn and Beddgelert—and deeply interested by the great experiment here being made, which should prove the pre-



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eminence of mind over matter, and of beneficent enterprise over the rude forces of nature, Shelley fixed upon Tremadoc as his place of abode. On inquiring for a house, he ascertained from Mr. Madocks' agent — John Williams — that Tanyrallt, the beautiful villa, alone upon its rocky perch, was now vacant. The number of rooms was more than sufficient for all his needs, and the landlord could afford to wait for his rent until payment was convenient. Immediately Shelley closed with the offer, and was in possession of Tanyrallt. "We simple people," he wrote at a later date,\* "live here in a cottage extensive and tasty enough for the villa of an Italian prince. The rent, as you may conceive, is large; but it is an object with us that they allow it to remain unpaid till I am of age."

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Could the poet in Shelley have been content to dwell at ease in a palace of art, he might now have chosen solitude for his bride, have environed himself with his own imaginings, or have gazed down from his mountain-platform in indifference on men who toiled and strove below. He, a child of the rain-bowed clouds and ærial mists, as we are told to conceive him, might have turned away from the sea-marsh and the toilers by the sea, and have found his delight in communion with the spirit of Nature, while pursuing the lonely mountain-stream, or abandoning himself to the mystery of the shy recesses of the hills. But with Shelley an enthusiasm of humanity came first, and any project for bettering the life of man claimed immediately his highest regard. All his thoughts and hopes and fears were at once given to the embankment. Its promise of beneficent results, its display of human contrivance on a great scale, its position as a centre around which the energies and lives of many men had gathered, were enough to excite Shelley's ardour and activity. The work must not be allowed to languish. Once again the tide had rolled fiercely against the embankment, and borne part of it

\* Shelley to Hogg: Tanyrallt, February 7, 1814.



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away. Shelley instantly resolved to put his own hand to the work, and to endeavour to induce others to follow his example. In company with Mr. Madocks' agent he visited the gentry of the county, to urge upon them the duty of aiding a great public enterprise. It was proposed to call a meeting and raise a subscription, Shelley at once giving in his own name for one hundred pounds.\* Thus some two or three thousand pounds were in good time obtained, and workmen were once again active in repairing the sea-breach and endeavouring to render the defences secure against future invasion. A chief object of Shelley's visit to London in October was to solicit further subscriptions, which should help to carry the great sea-walls forward impregnably to the point of junction.

By Sunday, October 4, Shelley, with his wife, his sister-in-law, and Miss Hitchener, had arrived in London, and found rooms at Lewis's Hotel, St. James's Street. To meet Godwin face to face had been looked forward to as one of the chief happinesses of this visit to London, and the first eager meeting was but one of many. Miss Hitchener had surely belied William Godwin when she represented him as possessed by an overweening self-esteem, and lacking in domestic charities. On the contrary, he was all sweetness and benignity; delighted with his young disciple, and for his sake willing to be put out of his habitual ways. And while he sat and conversed with Percy on high themes—matter and spirit, atheism, utility and truth, the clergy, Church government, or the characteristics of German thought and literature—Harriet would listen and look on with admiration, discovering a likeness in aspect between Godwin and the great master of antiquity from whom Plato had learnt to discourse of knowledge, virtue, and beauty.† Throughout October and the early part of the following month two days rarely went

\* Medwin says £500. Mrs. Williams, who is much more likely to be right, says £100.

† The topics of conversation enumerated above are noted by Godwin in his diary as having been discussed with Shelley.

by without a meeting between the friends. Now it was a call from Godwin at the hotel; now a walk with Shelley, enlivened by animated discussion; now a dinner at Godwin's house, to which Miss Hitchener or Eliza Westbrook would be invited, together with Harriet and Percy; and now the dinner—it is to be hoped not wholly of herbs—would be given in return by Shelley and his wife, who would receive, in company with their philosophic friend, the second Mrs. Godwin, and Mary Wollstonecraft's gentle daughter Fanny. During these days of early intercourse the Godwin household was viewed by the Shelleys through the rosiest veil of mist. Mrs. Godwin, who eleven years since had caught her illustrious husband in gross and palpable meshes of the flatterer's net, is known to have had an imperious temper and a most mendacious tongue. "She is a very disgusting woman," broke out Charles Lamb in 1801, "and wears green spectacles." But when she came to Lewis's Hotel, arrayed perhaps in her black velvet dress, and looking very short and very stout, her young acquaintances of 1812, whose spectacles were rose-coloured, found her to be chiefly distinguished by a sweet resoluteness and magnanimity of soul. They reflected with admiration, not wholly undeserved, on the gallant struggle she was making to carry on the Juvenile Library in Skinner Street. In her nine-years-old son they discovered an unfledged philosopher, worthy of such a father, though as yet capable only of chirping wisdom from a callow throat. Fanny Godwin (the name Imlay, if ever in use, had given place to that of Godwin) could not fail to interest any one who loved modesty, good sense, and sweetness of disposition; she was now in her nineteenth year, and through the plainness of her face beamed somewhat timidly the light of a heart not strong and joyous, but ever gentle and sympathetic. Of Jane Clairmont, daughter of Mrs. Godwin by her first marriage, we hear nothing on this occasion; during the visit of the Shelleys to London she was for not more than two nights at home.

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Godwin's only daughter, named Mary Wollstonecraft, after the mother who died at her birth—the child of love and grief, bearing the promise of so rare a heritage of intellectual strength and genius of the heart—had been absent since June with her father's friends, the Baxters of Dundee, sent to them from London that she might drink the invigorating Scottish air, and race about the Forfar woods and hills in company with her girl-friends and comrades Isabel and Christy Baxter; for Mary had been ailing in the early summer.\* On August 30 had come her fifteenth birthday, while she was still in Scotland; by October 10 Christy Baxter and Mary Godwin had arrived in London from the north; and when Shelley, with Harriet and Eliza Westbrook, dined next day at Godwin's house—the last occasion of the kind before his hasty departure for Tremadoc—it is possible that his eyes may have lighted on the fair face and girlish figure of one who was to influence his life so profoundly in after years. But no record remains of any such meeting between Shelley and Mary in this autumn of 1812.

On November 5, the day of Guy Faux, patron saint of squib and cracker loving urchins, Percy and Harriet, with Miss Hitchener, were at dinner with Godwin and his wife. Little William, the nine-years-old boy, announced that he was going to let off fireworks with his friend, young Newton, hard by Mr. Newton's house in Chester Street, Grosvenor Place. If there was a struggle in Shelley's breast between the rival attractions of wisdom on the lips of an elderly philosopher and of fiery figzigs in the hands of a pair of gleeful boys, the struggle was quickly decided in favour of

\* The following interesting passage respecting Mary from a letter of Godwin to Mr. Baxter, June 8, 1812, has not hitherto appeared in print: "I am anxious that she should be brought up . . . like a philosopher, even like a cynic. It will greatly add to the strength and worth of her character. I should also observe that she has no love of dissipation, and will be perfectly satisfied with your mountains and your woods. . . . I wish, too, that she should be excited to industry. She has occasionally great perseverance, but occasionally, too, she stands in great need to be roused."

youth and frolic and fireworks. "I will go with you," said Shelley to little William, and went; and when the gunpowder had blazed and cracked itself into smoke and smell, Shelley, again yielding to his impulse, and following young Newton, walked upstairs and introduced himself to the family circle at Chester Street. "Mr. and Mrs. Newton were highly pleased with the entire novelty and originality of their guest"—so writes Madame Gatayes, the little Octavia Newton of 1812—"and now fell into interesting conversation with him. My father easily discovered that the young visitor who had so agreeably surprised them was unusually well read. I recollect his saying that he had never met with so young a man who had acquired so much real knowledge of numerous authors."\* Thus began an important and interesting acquaintance with a household of unusual charm and refinement—an acquaintance which also served to introduce Shelley to Mrs. Newton's relatives the De Boinvilles, of whom we shall afterwards hear. If Shelley had not previously been aware of the fact, he probably learnt from Godwin, before proceeding to Chester Street, that Mr. Newton was zealous in the vegetarian faith, and had published two years previously an essay entitled "The Return to Nature," being a defence of the vegetable regimen. From Dr. William Lambe, of Warwick, a friend of the poet Landor, Mr. Newton had learnt the fatal effects of our flesh-meat dietary, and the effects, hardly less deadly, which follow the use of undistilled water. It would seem, as we are informed in the "luminous and eloquent" essay by Mr. Newton which so highly delighted

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\* I have to thank Madame Gatayes for some very interesting reminiscences of Shelley. It seems unlikely that she should err in fixing the anniversary of Gunpowder Plot as the date of the first interview of Shelley with her father and mother. I reproduce, however, entries in Godwin's diary for November 5 and 7. It occurs to me as possible that on November 7 the boys may have had a supplementary display of fireworks, and that it may have been on that evening that Shelley first found himself at Chester Street. Godwin writes, "November 5. Two Shelleys and E. Hitchener dine." "November 7. Dine at Shelley's with M. J. and F. [Mrs. Godwin and Fanny]; W. [William] and P. B. S. to Newton's."

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Shelley, that the story of the tree of life and that of the knowledge of good and evil is an allegory, veiling and setting forth the benefits of vegetable diet and the deadly consequences of indulgence in butcher's meat. The same doctrine was taught in pagan fable by the legend of Prometheus, who brought down fire from heaven, and by cookery instructed man how to render digestible the pernicious flesh of beasts. That raging thirst which consumes all flesh-eaters, and urges them to quench its torture in draughts of undistilled water, would speedily disappear if such gross livers would but return to nature and feed upon the fruits of the ground; then, to allay all thirst, it would be enough now and again to squeeze the juice of an orange against the lips. Since 1809 the household in Chester Street, consisting of Mr. and Mrs. Newton, a nurse, and four young children, had strictly adhered to the vegetable regimen. Mr. Newton's delicate health had been in a great degree restored; the bill for medicine and medical attendance during two years had amounted to sixpence; the children, said Shelley, "are the most beautiful and healthy creatures it is possible to conceive; the girls are perfect models for a sculptor; their dispositions are also the most gentle and conciliating." And we are assured that if Shelley delighted in the Newton children, the delight was not all on his side; they rejoiced when the tall, slight figure of their new friend appeared in Chester Street, and would fly downstairs from the nursery to meet him at his entrance. Hogg, with his characteristic play of satire, tells of a visit with Bysshe in the year 1813 to a house in London, which surely must have been that in Chester Street. "The custom of flesh-eating as much as that of covering our persons with clothes," Mr. Newton had written, "appears to have arisen from the migration of man into the northern climates, and the reaction of that circumstance, conjoined with the increasing ill effects of an unnatural diet." It was considered by Mr. Newton, according to Hogg's account, to be a desirable part

of the return to nature that the little ones should occasionally expose their bodies to the action of air and sunlight, unimpeded by clothing even of vegetable texture, or, as it was expressed in a single word, that they should at convenient seasons "nakedize." Ascending the steps hastily about five o'clock of a summer Sunday afternoon, Bysshe delivered at Mr. Newton's door one of his superb bravura knocks. When the door was thrown open and Hogg, as being the stranger, stood prepared to enter first, a singular spectacle presented itself—there were five naked childish figures in the passage advancing rapidly to welcome their friend, the teller of wonderful stories. "As soon as they saw me," writes Hogg, "they uttered a piercing cry, turned round and ran wildly upstairs, screaming aloud. The stairs presented the appearance of a Jacob's ladder, with the angels ascending it, except that they had no wings, and they moved faster and made more noise than the ordinary representations of the patriarch's vision indicate."

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Shelley's visit to London in October and November, 1812, is memorable as the occasion on which he renewed the acquaintance with Hogg, so unhappily interrupted at York a year since. In the interval Hogg had removed to London, entered as a student in the Middle Temple, and become the pupil of a special pleader. "I had returned from the country," he writes, "at the end of October, 1812, and had resumed the duties of a pleader. I was sitting in my quiet lodgings with my tea and a book before me; it was one evening at the beginning of November, probably about ten o'clock. I was roused by a violent knocking at the street door, as if the watchman was giving the alarm of fire; some one ran furiously upstairs, the door flew open, and Bysshe rushed into the middle of the room.

. . . He looked, as he always looked, wild, intellectual, unearthly; like a spirit that had just descended from the sky; like a demon risen at that moment out of the ground."\*

\* "Life of Shelley," vol. ii. pp. 166-168.

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Shelley could not nourish resentment against his old college friend; he had always assured Hogg that he was prepared to forgive and forget the past, if indeed the harmful passions of the past did not live on into the present. Now all was forgotten in the happiness of friendship renewed, and the exchange of recollections which should fill the gap of time during which the friends had suffered estrangement. It was late at night when Shelley departed. Next morning Hogg heard from his special pleader how "a very wild-looking man" had called at the chambers inquiring for him, and had obtained his address. "Did you see him?" inquired Hogg's legal director. "I hope he did not do you any harm." Before parting on the previous night, Bysshe had invited his friend to dine with him and Harriet at the hotel in St. James's Street. There at six o'clock, in a sitting-room high above the street, Hogg was received by Eliza Westbrook, who smiled faintly upon him in silence, and by Harriet, radiant and blooming as ever, with much cordial handshaking. To beguile the time Harriet produced a broadside sheet containing a report of Robert Emmet's speech before his judges, with a portrait of the unhappy young man at the top, standing at the bar and addressing the bench; but the hard-hearted Hogg refused to be touched or interested by the pathos of the woodcut. "Presently Bysshe came thundering upstairs from the street like a cannon-ball, and we had dinner. After dinner the poet spoke of Wales with enthusiasm. I was to come and see it. He talked rapturously of the waterfalls, walking about the room and gesticulating as he described them. . . . Soon after tea Eliza said they must go and pack up; they were to set out for Wales early next morning, and she trembled for dear Harriet's nerves. A few shabby, ill-printed books, productions of the Irish press, were lying about the room; they treated of the history of Ireland and of the affairs of that country." But of his Irish expedition Shelley refrained to speak; nor does he seem to have been disposed to be more confidential about

his manner of life in London, for Hogg was not informed of his acquaintance and almost constant intercourse with William Godwin. Instead of the old friendship without reserves, there was now for Hogg a friendship

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“ But, as it were, in sort or limitation,”

while Shelley kept half of himself apart from one the range of whose sympathies was defined and understood.\*

To regain an old friend was well ; to be rid of a new friend who had grown insupportable, was a matter of yet livelier rejoicing. The Elizabeth Hitchener of Shelley's dream-world, the Roman Portia of the correspondence, had disappeared for ever, and in her place stood a mere mortal woman—tall, lean, brown-visaged, thirty years of age, glorified by no peculiar nimbus, and having parts and passions as obnoxious to comment and criticism as those of any ordinary human creature. Her opinions, theological and political, were sadly tainted by the spirit of compromise. Her temper was variable, and it is probable enough that soon the poor Sussex schoolmistress had cause for sinkings of the heart, as she came to feel how difficult and delicate was her position. It is hardly conceivable that Eliza Westbrook and Harriet should long have accepted with complacency the presence of one their superior in intellect, the chosen partner of Shelley's spirit in its higher strivings and aspirations ; a special outpouring of divine grace would have been needed to render the situation tolerable. Probably Miss Hitchener, through indiscreet speeches, had a share in bringing her fate upon herself ; probably she assumed authority in the spiritual province, leaving it to the other ladies to provide for Shelley's material wants. Certainly Harriet was stung by expressions which implied that the girl-wife must take up a humbler position of

\* Hogg's first visit to the Shelleys cannot have been his only visit, for on Sunday, November 8, he dined at the hotel. Probably, in the account of the first visit, he has jumbled up circumstances of a later visit on the eve of Shelley's departure.



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service towards Percy than that held by the elect sister of his soul, and she believed that Miss Hitchener's aim was to separate her from her husband, whose love had in truth grown closer and fonder since the marriage-flight to Scotland. Shelley's very extravagance of idealization had prepared the way for a revulsion of feeling. Elizabeth Hitchener had been so much above humanity that it was now the less difficult for her to become a supernatural being of a different species; she was no longer "Portia," or even "Bessy," but was now known to the circle of her non-admirers as the "Brown Demon." Poor Brown Demon, with a woman's pride and a woman's nerves; and poor dreamer awakened from his dream! A sorry business, however one looks at it!—the errors of youthful idealism avenging themselves, and leaving behind them wounds and heartache, or apathy and disgust. In London, probably, the crisis came; and affairs would seem to have been managed with a certain decency. Perceiving that he had done Miss Hitchener a material injury when he persuaded her to abandon her school and expose herself to the cruel gossip of her neighbours, Shelley undertook to make good that injury as far as was possible, promising her an annuity, for how long or short a period we know not, of one hundred pounds. Whether she ever actually accepted such compensation we cannot be quite certain. However this may have been, she consented to take her departure. Godwin was probably informed of the state of things, for in his diary we find, under the date November 8, the significant entry: "Call on E. Westbrook (E. H. *congé*)." It was a Sunday, and Hogg appeared that morning at the hotel. The presence of a stranger on an unpleasant occasion has its uses; the skeleton is at least not taken from its closet to exhibit its nakedness and to grin and gibber in public. Shelley had an engagement elsewhere; Harriet suffered from a headache. It was proposed to Hogg that he should take Miss Westbrook and Miss Hitchener for an airing, and because he consented, if he ever

sinned as man or biographer, his sins must be forgiven. CHAP.  
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 "With the brown demon on my right arm and the black diamond on my left," writes Hogg in his derisive way, "we went forth into St. James's Park, and walked there and in the neighbouring parks for a long time, a very long time. 'These were my jewels,' as Cornelia proudly exclaimed." Dinner passed off quietly; when evening came a coach was called, and Miss Hitchener took a courteous leave of her altered friends. A weight seemed to be lifted from the spirits of all as soon as the coach was fairly out of sight.

Godwin had warned Shelley that if he made haste by early publication to pledge himself to ill-considered views, his life would become a series of retractations. A retraction of utterances of the heart is perhaps attended with greater risk than a confession of intellectual mistake; but it was through error after cloudy error that Shelley advanced towards the wisdom and lucidity of soul which would have been his had his life been prolonged, which were his in large measure before the close. If it was Eliza Westbrook's and Harriet's purpose to make him entertain the worst opinion of Miss Hitchener, they assuredly effected their end. "She is a woman of desperate views and dreadful passions," he wrote five months later, "but of cool and undeviating revenge."\* Had Shelley seen the real Elizabeth Hitchener instead of inventing this fire-breathing chimæra he might have learnt that humbling lesson in wisdom of the heart which the events were well fitted to teach. And, indeed, the lesson was not altogether thrown away upon him. "The Brown Demon, as we call our late tormentor and school-mistress, must receive her stipend"—so Shelley wrote to Hogg (December 3). "I pay it with a heavy heart and an unwilling hand; but it must be so. She was deprived by our misjudging haste of a situation where she was going on smoothly; and now she says that her reputation is gone, her health ruined, her peace of mind destroyed by my barbarity; a complete

\* To Williams : 35, Great Cuffe Street [Dublin], March 30, 1813.

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 Sept. 1812- suffered! This is not all fact; but certainly she is embarrassed  
 Apr. 1813. and poor, and we being in some degree the cause, we ought to  
 obviate it." Whereupon follows an outbreak of unmitigated  
 and fantastic vituperation, and then the acknowledgment of  
 his own lack of discernment and discretion. "My astonish-  
 ment at my fatuity, inconsistency, and bad taste was never so  
 great as after living for four months with her as an inmate.  
 What would Hell be were such a woman in Heaven?" In  
 later years, when the pain and the shame of his indiscretion  
 had died down into the past, Shelley could look back and  
 tickle his fancy with a glance at the grotesque points of the  
 situation. Miss Hitchener had maintained the rights of  
 woman, and once attempted an ode celebrating the emancipa-  
 tion of her sex. According to Medwin, Shelley, when in Italy,  
 would sometimes recite, laughing till the tears ran down his  
 cheeks, the opening line, which struck the key-note of the  
 whole—

"All, all are men—women and all!"

The "Brown Demon," though wounded and sore with a sense of unmerited dishonour, seems to have cherished a gentler feeling towards Shelley. "I saw her after her return, at the house of her father," wrote an acquaintance of Shelley's who in happier days had been the bearer of messages from him to her, "sitting alone, with one of Shelley's works before her. Her fine black eye lighted up, her well-formed Roman countenance was full of animation, when I spoke of Shelley." \* In 1822, the year of Shelley's death, appeared a blank-verse poem by Miss Hitchener, entitled "The Weald of Sussex," which proves that its author, though not a poet, was a woman of some culture and vigour of mind. It is perhaps not fanciful to trace a reference to the ardent days of her early friendship with Shelley in two stanzas of an introductory piece, in which she

\* The "Newspaper Editor" in *Fraser's Magazine*.

addresses her little volume as it goes forth to greet the world :

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"No kindred friendship soothed thine infant years,  
No brilliant converse to elicit truth,  
When leaps the soul, as sweet response it hears,  
And wisdom mingles with the fire of youth.

"Yet once,—a vision waked thy slumbering lyre,  
Which fancy whispered wise and great and fair ;  
One which could loftiest, noblest strains inspire,  
And to sweet cadence tune thy wildest air."

Let us take farewell of Miss Hitchener, not in her character of "Brown Demon," but in that of a woman useful and respected. In later days she and her sister conducted a girls' school at Edmonton with credit and success. "The school-days I passed at Edmonton," writes a former pupil, "under the kind and judicious teaching of Miss Hitchener, were some of the happiest in my life. Miss Hitchener was exceedingly fond of poetry, and used to recite Darwin's 'Eliza' to us in such a way that it brought tears into our eyes. We knew that she was acquainted with Shelley, but never knew how she was associated with the family. . . . I consider her to have been a high-principled, clever woman, with a remarkable capacity for teaching. I think all her pupils loved her. Both she and her sister will be cherished in my memory as long as it lasts." \* So may Miss Hitchener rest—no demon, but a kindly guide and guardian of children, and may her faults lie gently on her.

During his six weeks' visit to London Shelley exerted himself vigorously on behalf of the subscription for completing the embankment at Tremadoc; but the result of his efforts was not encouraging. He had heard from Mr. Madocks' agent, Williams, that the men were now working with a will, and that some real progress had been made. If, therefore, the means of paying wages could be procured, all might be well. Too often the labourer had toiled for nothing better than a

\* Mrs. Caffyn to Mrs. Sadler, January, 1884, writing of sixty years back.

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promise of his hire, and when evening came had attempted to obtain some subsistence for his family by cultivating under the moonlight a small patch of sterile ground. It was a disappointment to Shelley to find that he could effect so little; he was still a minor, and could not raise money on his expectations without paying a ruinous interest; his friends and acquaintances were strangely apathetic about the great enterprise in North Wales. "The Duke of Norfolk," he wrote to Williams,\* "has just returned to London. I shall call upon him this morning, and shall spare no pains in engaging his interests, or perhaps his better feelings, in ours and our country's cause. I see no hope of effecting, on my part, any grand or decisive scheme until the expiration of my minority. In Sussex I meet with no encouragement. They are a parcel of cold, selfish, and calculating animals, who seem to have no other aim or business on earth but to eat, drink, and sleep; but in the meanwhile my fervid hopes, my ardent desires, my unremitting personal exertions (so far as my health will allow), are all engaged in that cause, which I will desert *but with my life*."

The last days in London were days of "embarrassments, qualms, and fluctuations," caused we know not by what, unless it were difficulties about money. The date of departure for Wales, first fixed for November 12, had been postponed, and an invitation to dinner for Friday, the 13th, was given to Godwin; but on that day, submitting, says Shelley, "to a galling yet unappealable necessity," he quitted London hastily with Harriet and Eliza Westbrook, too much pressed for time even to make a farewell call on Godwin's household. Passing through Oxford, where the outcast student of University College may have pointed out the walls from which he was sent forth in exile, the travellers rested for the night at Stratford-on-Avon, among memories the most sacred to a poet. Having proceeded, by way of Birmingham and Shrewsbury,

\* St. James's Coffee Room, November 7, 1812.

to Capel Curig, they wound thence in their chaise under the heights of Snowdon towards Tremadoc. "The scenery," Shelley wrote a little later, when inviting Hogg to visit him, "is more strikingly grand in the way from Capel Curig to our house than ever I beheld. The road passes at the foot of Snowdon; all around you see lofty mountain-peaks, lifting their summits far above the clouds, wildly wooded valleys below, and dark tarns reflecting every tint and shape of the scenery above them. The roads are tremendously rough; I shall bring a horse for you, as you will then be better able to see the country than when jumbled in a chaise." \* It was a joy to Shelley to escape from the excitement and hurry of the great city, with its painfully contrasted extremes of wealth and misery, to the free air and joyous strength of the hills. Yet he had dedicated himself to the service of man rather than to the worship of nature; if virtue flowed in to him from mountain and vale, this must nerve him to renewed effort on behalf of his toiling and suffering fellows, and by its calming influence must chasten and purify the indignation which seized him at sight of the wrongs and outrages endured by the wretched and the oppressed. Such thoughts and feelings as these took shape in a poem, written perhaps in anticipation of his departure from London, in which he breathes a farewell to the "miserable city," with its dark tide of woe and glare of loveless mirth, and then looks forth with desire towards the wild Welsh hills.†

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"Hail to thee, Cambria! for the unfettered wind  
Which from thy wilds even now methinks I feel,  
Chasing the clouds that roll in wrath behind,  
And tightening the soul's laxest nerves to steel;

\* Tanyralit, February 7, 1813.

† This poem of eight stanzas, of which I print four by permission of Mr. Esdaile, is entitled "On leaving London for Wales." Expressions in the piece seem to show that it was not written actually in presence of the Welsh landscape. It can only refer to the present occasion, or to the visit in 1811 to Cwm Elan. In all respects—including the reference to Snowdon—it seems to me to suit the autumn of 1812 better than the summer of 1811.

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True mountain Liberty alone may heal  
 The pain which Custom's obdurances bring,  
 And he who dares in fancy even to steal  
 One draught from Snowdon's ever sacred spring  
 Blots out the unholyest rede of worldly witnessing.

"And shall that soul, to selfish peace resigned,  
 So soon forget the woe its fellows share?  
 Can Snowdon's Lethe from the freeborn mind  
 So soon the page of injured penury tear?  
 Does this fine mass of human passion dare  
 To sleep, unhonouring the patriot's fall,  
 Or life's sweet load in quietude to bear  
 While millions famish even in Luxury's hall,  
 And Tyranny high raised stern lowers on all?"

"No, Cambria! never may thy matchless vales  
 A heart so false to hope and virtue shield;  
 Nor ever may thy spirit-breathing gales  
 Waft freshness to the slaves who dare to yield.  
 For me! . . . the weapon that I burn to wield  
 I seek amid thy rocks to ruin hurled,  
 That Reason's flag may over Freedom's field,  
 Symbol of bloodless victory, wave unfurled,  
 A meteor-sign of love effulgent o'er the world.

"Do thou, wild Cambria, calm each struggling thought;  
 Cast thy sweet veil of rocks and woods between,  
 That by the soul to indignation wrought  
 Mountains and dells be mingled with the scene;  
 Let me for ever be what I have been,  
 But not for ever at my needy door  
 Let Misery linger speechless, pale, and lean;  
 I am the friend of the unfriended poor,  
 Let me not madly stain their righteous cause in gore."

"I am the friend of the unfriended poor" was with Shelley a simple statement of fact. In the bitter winter of 1812 the toilers at the Tremadoc embankment, ill-paid or unpaid, suffered many hardships. "I have often heard Mr. Madocks

dilate," writes Medwin, "on Shelley's numerous acts of benevolence, his relieving the distresses of the poor, visiting them in their humble abodes, and supplying them with food and raiment and fuel during the winter." "He was very generous and kind-hearted," declared Mrs. Williams, when recalling what she had learnt from her husband respecting Shelley at Tremadoc; and she went on to tell how on one occasion, when there was talk in Shelley's presence of the straitened means of a poor widow in the neighbourhood, he said nothing, but next morning a five-pound note—his gift—was in the needy creature's hands. In Wales, as in London, he seemed to see mankind unnaturally divided into two races—the well-to-do, protected from painful sympathy with their fellows by a thick non-conducting web of comfort, prejudice, pride; and the indigent, ever toiling yet ever on the edge of beggary, helpless, hopeless, inured to submission by long years of crouching and piteous shambling towards the grave. Wales, he wrote in an indignant mood, "is the last stronghold of the most vulgar and commonplace prejudices of aristocracy. Lawyers of unexampled villany rule and grind the poor, whilst they cheat the rich. The peasants are mere serfs, and are fed and lodged worse than pigs. The gentry have all the ferocity and despotism of the ancient barons, without their dignity and chivalric disdain of shame and danger. The poor are as abject as Samoyeds, and the rich as tyrannical as bashaws." \* Perhaps in our easy-going optimism, which seeks to find a soul of goodness in things evil, there is not a larger portion of divine wisdom than in that less comfortable view which passionately recognizes in evil things their essential soul of evil.

The affairs of the embankment now pressed heavily on Shelley, and were felt as a serious inconvenience, for important poetical designs claimed his undivided care, and the difficulties connected with Mr. Madocks' great enterprise teased him out of all poetry. "He helped my husband to write letters," says

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Mrs. Williams, "and was in the office from morning to night, using every means in his power to show his kind interest." It may have been these weary efforts to rouse others to a zeal like his own, and these long office hours, which caused a momentary outbreak of impatience in a letter of February 7, 1813, to Hogg: "I have been teased to death for the last fortnight. Had you known the variety of the discomfitures I have undergone, you would attribute my silence to anything but unkindness or neglect. I allude to the embankment affairs, in which I thoughtlessly engaged; for when I come home to Harriet I am the happiest of the happy." There is ground for believing that Shelley and Harriet, as they came to know more of the circumstances of Tremadoc, lost faith, at least for a time, in Mr. Madocks and his disinterested patriotism; that they questioned whether on the whole he had not done more harm than good to the Welsh people; and that the daily sight of an unprofitable waste of sand, through which the sea-water still soaked and oozed, grew a fatigue to their eyes, and filled them, when they thought of the human effort expended upon its reclamation, with indignant despair. It was the history of the expedition to Dublin repeated in another shape; and hopes as ardent as those which sank in the quicksands of Irish politics now were swallowed in the estuary of the Traeth mawr.

But at home with Harriet her husband was "the happiest of the happy."\* Harriet's thoughts still took their colour, as by a pale reflection, from his, and she repeated his phrases about virtue, benevolence, equality, wisdom, with sufficient aptitude. Her voice when she sang lent a charm to the winter evenings, and it was old and plain melodies that she best loved, especially the ancient airs of Ireland. "I wish you to send me the song of 'Robin Adair' and 'Kate of Kearney,'" she wrote to Hookham (January 31); "they are very old songs, but they may be the better for that, as our new music is generally very stupid." Under Shelley's guidance, and probably in part at

\* To Hogg, February 7, 1813.

least to give him pleasure, she worked at the study of Latin, could already read some Odes of Horace, and was even projecting a Latin epistle to Hogg. "I do not teach her grammatically," Shelley wrote, "but by the less laborious method of teaching her the English of Latin words, intending afterwards to give her a general idea of grammar."\* Beside these indoor sources of pleasure during the winter of 1812-13, there was ever present the happiness of a new hope and a new care, for Shelley and Harriet expected that when summer came a babe would be in their arms. In a letter from Keswick to Miss Hitchener, Shelley had confessed his longing for the joy of children. "It will bind you and me closer and Harriet," he had said. "I, who believe in the omnipotence of education, have no fears for their eventual well-being." Now it seemed likely that the dream might change into a glad reality. His annual income, indeed, without the presence of this new crier for gold, had been proving itself insufficient to meet the varied demands of travel, household expenses, and charity; but every month brought nearer the date of his majority, when it would be possible to raise money on reasonable interest—a knowledge of which fact might convince his father that it was impolitic to be tight-fisted. Acting on the advice of Hogg, Shelley wrote in December to the Duke of Norfolk, begging that his Grace's kind offices might be used on his behalf with Mr. Timothy Shelley; and on the opening of the new year he had himself addressed his father, stating the difficulties of his position, and adding kind inquiries and good wishes for all at Field Place. Mr. Shelley returned the good wishes tenfold, hoping that his son would have many and more happy years, but responded to the

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\* Shelley's own words must outweigh those of Mrs. Williams, who had only a second-hand acquaintance with his affairs. "I fancy," she wrote, "that his wife and her sister had neither of them much mind; they were not very suitable companions for such a man, and to make up the void he took to his house a Miss Hitchener, a very clever, talented person, who used to write for him and help him in his literary study; it was not very likely that peace or harmony would long reign in such adverse elements, and he found confusion and anarchy in his house as well as poverty." There is a portion of truth, however, in these words.

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The happiness which Shelley enjoyed at Tanyrallt came chiefly from his own musings and imaginations, from his companionship with Harriet, and from that environment of mountain and solitary vales amid which his thought and love formed, as it were, an ideal centre. At Nantgwillt he had found his Welsh neighbours "very apathetical on the subject of politics." Around Tremadoc they were all "aristocrats or saints; but that I tell you," Shelley goes on in a letter to

\* Field Place, January, 1813.

Hogg (December 3, 1812), "I do not mind in the least: the unpleasant part of the business is, they hunt people to death who are not so likewise." And to Hookham, in a letter of the same date, "There is more philosophy in one square inch of your counter than in the whole of Cambria." With only one family in the neighbourhood does he seem to have been on intimate and happy terms of friendship—the Nanneys of Gwynfryn. A letter from Harriet to Mr. Williams—trivial waif floating down to us, when so much of greater worth has disappeared—remains in existence, in which she, who had no housewifely gifts, bustles about tea-cups and coffee-cups, wine-glasses and decanters, cruet-stands and butter-boats, all needed at Tanyrallt in anticipation of a visit from Mr. and Mrs. Nanney. For the rest, when affairs of the embankment did not trouble him, the solitude around Shelley was deep and delightful. Yet newspapers and letters from friends in London kept open his communications with the great world. When, in January, 1813, the execution of fourteen of the riotous framebreakers known as Luddites took place at York, Shelley and Harriet heard of it before long, and were eager to start a subscription in London for the destitute widows and orphans of the victims. "Put down my sister's name, Mr. Shelley's, and mine for two guineas each," Harriet wrote to Hookham, "if this meets your approbation, and we will enclose the sum." A month earlier John and Leigh Hunt, as printer and editor of the *Examiner*, had been convicted of publishing a libel, intended to traduce and vilify his Royal Highness the Prince Regent, whom they had described as a violator of his word, a libertine over head and ears in disgrace, a despiser of domestic ties, a companion of gamblers and demireps, and, hardly less libellously, as a corpulent gentleman of fifty. "He the first gentleman of Europe!" exclaimed Thackeray in later days. "There is no stronger satire on the proud English society of that day than that they admired George." The invective of the *Examiner*, however, was unquestionably libellous. "Could

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When, in February, 1813, the Hunts were sentenced to two years' imprisonment in separate gaols, with a fine of five hundred pounds each, Shelley's indignation flamed forth in a letter to Hookham, and he longed to bring speedy succour, as far as was possible, to men whom he regarded as the distressed champions of liberty of speech. "I am boiling with indignation at the horrible injustice and tyranny of the sentence pronounced on Hunt and his brother; and it is on this subject that I write to you. Surely the seal of abjectness and slavery

\* Lord Ellenborough had spoken of the Prince Regent's infidelity to his wife as a "misfortune" which had overtaken him.

is indelibly stamped upon the character of England. Although I do not retract in the slightest degree my wish for a subscription for the widows and children of those poor men hung at York, yet this £1000 which the Hunts are sentenced to pay is an affair of more consequence. Hunt is a brave, a good, and an enlightened man. Surely the public, for whom Hunt has done so much, will repay in part the great debt of obligation which they owe the champion of their liberties and virtues; or are they dead, cold, stone-hearted, and insensible—brutalized by centuries of unremitting bondage? However that may be, they surely may be excited into some slight acknowledgment of his merits. While hundreds of thousands are sent to the tyrants of Russia, he pines in a dungeon, far from all that can make life to be desired. Well—I am rather poor at present; but I have £20 which is not immediately wanted. Pray begin a subscription for the Hunts; put my name [down] for that sum, and when I hear that you have complied with my request, I will send it you. Now, if there are any difficulties in the way of this scheme of ours, for the love of liberty and virtue overcome them. Oh! that I might wallow for one night in the Bank of England!”\* Shelley’s twenty pounds sped on their way to Hookham, but the difficulty of applying the sum to its intended use was insuperable—the Hunts magnanimously refused to let their friends or the public be taxed in order that they might possess the privilege of rash speaking. We may surmise that Shelley wrote direct to Hunt in prison, offering to pay either the whole or a great part of the fine. “He wrote to me,” says Leigh Hunt, “making me a princely offer;” but whatever this offer may have been, it was promptly and decidedly declined.

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While Shelley thus sprang forward to support the cause which he regarded as that of truth and freedom, a certain moderation and tolerance with respect to those who honestly differed from him were growing up within him. To Hogg he

\* The letter is undated, but has the postmark February 19.

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protested against the supposition that the wide severance between their moral and political creeds could cause any shadow of alienation on his part. "You misinterpret my feelings on the state of the moral world," he wrote (December 3), "when you suppose that the bigotry of commonplace republicanism or the violence of faction enters into them at all. I am certainly a very resolved republican (if the word applies) and a determined sceptic; but although I think their reasonings very defective, I am clearly aware that the noblest feelings might conduct some few reflecting minds to aristocracy and Episcopacy. Hume certainly was an aristocrat, and Locke was a zealous Christian." And again, to Hogg, in February, 1813, "I need not say that your letters delight me, but all your principles do not. The species of pride which you love to encourage appears to me incapable of bearing the test of reason. Now, do not tell me that Reason is a cold and insensible arbiter. Reason is only an assemblage of our better feelings—passion considered under a peculiar mode of its operation. . . . Perhaps you will say that my republicanism is proud; it certainly is far removed from pot-house democracy, and knows with what smile to hear the servile applauses of an inconstant mob. But though its cheeks could feel without a blush the hand of insult strike, its soul would shrink neither from the scaffold nor the stake, nor from those deeds and habits which are obnoxious to slaves in power. My republicanism, it is true, would bear with an aristocracy of chivalry and refinement before an aristocracy of commerce and vulgarity; not, however, from pride, but because the one I consider as approaching most nearly to what man ought to be." In such utterances we recognize some growth towards maturity of intellect and temper.

From Godwin letters came now and again to Shelley at Tremadoc.\* Six weeks' personal intercourse with the author

\* Godwin notes in his diary, "Wrote to Shelley" on November 18 and 25, December 10, January 25, February 11, 26, and 27.

of "Political Justice" had somewhat abated or qualified the enthusiasm with which the Shelley household had at first regarded him. What Miss Hitchener had stated on her arrival at Lynmouth was too true—Godwin exacted from those who approached him a degree of deference which made it difficult to be at ease in his company; and his influence seemed to be chiefly exerted to check and chill the ardour of spirits younger and more impassioned than his own. Still, a thinker so eminently useful, a veteran in persecution, a votary of freedom and virtue, though now in his decline, justly claimed their respectful consideration. Of Fanny Godwin a happier impression seems to have remained with her new friends. A little while after his arrival from London, Shelley wrote to her in a tone of pleasant *cameraderie*, with touches of playfulness not common in his early letters. She had wished to ask him certain questions, but was diffident about beginning a correspondence. She had blamed him for his hurried flight to Wales, as sudden and mysterious as the proceedings of the hero of a modern novel, and used words which implied that she looked upon Harriet as "a fine lady;" to all which Shelley good-humouredly responds, "So you do not know whether it is *proper* to write to me? Now, one of the most conspicuous considerations that arise from such a topic is—what am I? I am one of those formidable and long-clawed animals called a *man*, and it is not until I have assured you that I am one of the most inoffensive of my species, that I live on vegetable food, and never bit since I was born, that I venture to obtrude myself on your attention. But to be serious. I shall feel much satisfaction in replying, with as much explicitness as my nature is capable of, to any questions you may put to me. I know that I have in some degree forfeited a direct claim to your confidence and credit, and that of your inestimable circle; but if you will believe me as much as you can, I will be as sincere as I can. I certainly am convinced that, with the exception of one or two isolated instances, I am so far from

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being an insincere man, that my plainness has occasionally given offence, and caused some to accuse me of being defective in that urbanity and toleration which is supposed to be due to society. Allow me, in the absence of the topics which are eventually to be discussed between us, to assume the privilege you have claimed and ask a question. How is Harriet a fine lady? You indirectly accuse her in your letter of this offence—to me the most unpardonable of all. The ease and simplicity of her habits, the unassuming plainness of her address, the uncalculated connection of her thought and speech, have ever formed, in my eyes, her greatest charms; and none of these are compatible with fashionable life, or the attempted assumption of its vulgar and noisy *éclat*. . . . If all my laughs were not dreadful sardonic grins, disgraceful to the most hideous of Cheshire cats, I should certainly laugh at two things in your last letter. The one is, ‘not knowing whether it is proper to write to me,’ lest—God knows what might happen; and the other is, comparing our movements to that of a modern novel. Now a novel (ancient or modern) never moves but as the reader moves, and I, being a reader, if I take up one of these similitudes of our progress, never can get beyond the third line in the second page; therefore you ought rather to have compared a novel to a snail than to us.

“Now, my dear Fanny, do not be angry at either my laughs, my criticisms, or my queries. They proceed from levity, my proper view of things, and my desire of setting them before you in what I consider a right light.

“Your questions shall be answered with precision; and if hope in my quality as a man be not too tremendous, I shall acquire from the result an interesting and valuable correspondent.”

Fanny Godwin, we may suppose, stated her questions, and received an answer from Shelley; but there is no ground for supposing that the correspondence was continued.

The summer, autumn, and winter which went by while

Shelley resided at Lynmouth and at Tremadoc had been a period of earnest study, of many literary plans and projects, and of important poetical achievement. At an age when, if Shelley had pursued his career at Oxford, he might have been nourishing his spirit with the wisest thoughts and the high ideals of beauty to be found in classical antiquity, he turned away from these impatiently, and maintained, in spite of Godwin's arguments in favour of classical learning, that "the evils of acquiring Greek and Latin considerably overbalance the benefit." Not one of the truths of "Political Justice"—thus he pleaded in support of his opinion—rests on the excellence of ancient literature. The governments of republican Rome and of some states of Greece were as oppressive and arbitrary as the government of Great Britain under George III. As for the Greek and Roman poets, Godwin himself had admitted that "they are fit for nothing but the perpetuation of the noxious race of heroes." Lucretius forms, perhaps, the single exception. Throughout the whole of ancient literature honour and fame, or public opinion, are set above virtue. The politics of the old world were corrupt because their morals were corrupt. "They are our masters in politics," said Shelley, "because we are so immoral as to prefer self-interest to virtue, and expediency to positive good." Why spend the best years of youth in learning *words*—words which eminently contribute to the growth of prejudice—when the same years might be profitably employed in the study of *things*? "I should think," Shelley went on, "that natural philosophy, medicine, astronomy, and, above all, history, would be sufficient employments for immaturity. . . . Of the Latin language, as a grammar, I think highly. It is a key to the European languages, and we can hardly be said to know our own without first attaining a complete knowledge of it. Still, I cannot help considering it as an affair of minor importance, inasmuch as the science of things is superior to the science of words." The vindicators of ancient learning—excepting Godwin, who was

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willing to subject his opinions to reason—were no better than indicators of a literary despotism, tracers of a circle which was intended to shut out from real knowledge all who do not breathe the air of prejudice.\*

"It delights me to discuss and be sceptical," Shelley had written to Miss Hitchener; "thus we must arrive at truth." Perhaps we should receive his argument against classical learning as expressing no more than a passing view of things from the side of scepticism; we know that no English poet ever drank with more eager delight from the old-world sources of beauty and wisdom than Shelley; that Homer and Plato never found a more delighted listener, and that when his body was thrown by the sea on the Italian shore, a volume of Sophocles—still reverently treasured—was found in the possession of the dead. But in 1812 the chosen masters of his intellect were lights of the modern world—heralds of revolution, the leaders of the "illumination" in France. Of Kant he had heard, and was desirous to study his writings through a translation into Latin; if Shelley at this period read German at all, he read it imperfectly and with difficulty. From Hookham he obtained a copy of Spinoza's "*Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*," and perhaps a copy of the "*Opera Posthuma*;" but although Shelley afterwards worked at a translation of the "*Tractatus*" at three several times, we find no evidence that he received in youth any adequate or profound impression, as Goethe did, from the purest and loftiest spirit among philosophical seekers after God. Of far greater influence with Shelley than Spinoza or Kant were those arrogant thinkers who prepared the soil of France for the ploughshare of revolution. With eager curiosity and wistful longing he followed upon their traces. "Do you know anything," he wrote to Hookham, "of the famous French *Encyclopédie* composed by Voltaire, D'Alembert, etc.? It is a book I should much wish to have. Is it to

\* Shelley to Godwin: Lynnmouth, July 29, 1812. The letter is printed in Hogg's "*Life of Shelley*," vol. ii. pp. 145–151.

be obtained? Could you obtain it? . . . There is a work by a French physician, Cabanis, that I wish you also to send." \* CHAP.  
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Apr. 1813. Already he had read Helvétius. But the work which at this time, more than any other, contributed to his patchwork system of thought was the celebrated "Système de la Nature"—the extreme philosophical outcome of eighteenth-century materialism.† That a young poet, born, if any ever were, to be a spirit-winged idealist, should have found a gospel in the last word of atheistic materialism, clumsily uttered by a German turned Frenchman, is a fact to make us pause and wonder. A greater than Shelley, whose mind, moving in its wide orbit of ordered freedom, was to Shelley's mind as the planet Jupiter to some radiant, wandering sphere—Goethe—has recorded the impression made upon him in youth by Holbach's exposition of the laws of his godless universe. "How hollow and empty," says Goethe, "did we feel in this melancholy, atheistical half-night, in which the earth vanished with all its images, the heaven with all its stars! There was to be a matter existing from eternity, and eternally moved, and by this motion to right and left and in every direction—by this and no more—it was to produce the infinite phenomena of existence. Even with all this we might have been satisfied, if the author out of his matter in motion had really built up the world before our eyes. But he seemed to know as little about nature as we did; for, having set up some general ideas, he quits them at once, in order to change that which seems higher than nature, or as a higher nature within nature, into dull material nature, moved, indeed, but without direction or form; and thus he fancies that he has gained something important."‡ Holbach's book, which gave Goethe, as a youth, a distaste for all philosophy, so highly delighted Shelley, that, while still ignorant

\* Tanyrallt, December 17, 1812.

† Shelley may have been led to this book by a mention of it in the preface to "Political Justice."

‡ "Dichtung und Wahrheit," book xi.

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of its authorship, he resolved to render it into English. Reading the work in his solitudes at Nantgwilt and Lynmouth, he was struck by it as "a book of uncommon powers, yet too obnoxious to accusations of sensuality and selfishness."\* At a later date he looked back upon the intellectual teachers of his youth with a sense of the injury he had suffered at their hands. "The doctrines of the French and material philosophy," he wrote in the year of his death, "are as false as they are pernicious." And in the prose fragment "On Life," written perhaps about 1819, "The shocking absurdities of the popular philosophy of mind and matter, its fatal consequences in morals, and their violent dogmatism concerning the source of all things, had early conducted me to materialism. This materialism is a seducing system to young and superficial minds. It allows its disciples to talk, and dispenses them from thinking. But I was discontented with such a view of things as it afforded. Man is a being of high aspirations, 'looking before and after,' whose 'thoughts wander through eternity,' disclaiming alliance with transience and decay; existing but in the future and the past; being not what he is, but what he has been and shall be." When these words were written, matter and motion had disappeared as ultimate realities from Shelley's spiritual vision; he perceived no existence except that of universal mind and its phenomena.

Yet the philosophers of the French illumination wrought a needful work, for which it behoves us to be duly grateful; and Shelley, their disciple, was not wholly led astray. When the Church had forgotten Christ, when the State had forgotten man, the French philosophers came to mock away old hypocrisies, and to pluck at the roots of selfish power and privilege

\* To Godwin: Lynmouth, July 29, 1812. In a letter to Hookham of August 18, Shelley writes, "I am about translating an old French work, professedly by a M. Mirabaud—not the famous one—'Système de la Nature.' Do you know anything of it?" Shelley means, "not by the famous Mirabeau." The "Système" was published in 1770. J. B. de Mirabaud had died a short time before this liberty was taken with his name.

which overshadowed the life of society. They effected a clearance, and opened a vista beyond which new ideals might arise before men's eyes. Their formula—a return to nature—may have expressed a vague and dangerous doctrine; their work may have been more to destroy than to build up; yet it was they who were the believers of their day, and matched with infidels—the mundane priests and the pleasure-hunting courtiers—they were a power which must needs prevail. A positive faith and a creative sentiment underlay their rage of destruction—a faith in human intellect, and the sentiment of social justice. The movement to which they belonged has not spent its force. Now, a hundred years after the intellectual upheaval in France, we feel that we are still toiling in a stupendous revolution; and liberty, equality, fraternity, are words which, if they have lost some of their august power, are being translated for us daily and yearly into concrete facts, while yet unthought-of meanings, we do not doubt, wait to be transferred from abstraction into reality. We still dream of a time when toil shall be no longer the toil of a slave, when class shall not war against class, when a sense of brotherhood shall bind each man to his fellows, when the life of the poorest shall not be like threescore years and ten in an Inferno; we dream of such a time and seek after it. The impulse towards bettering man's life has come to us largely from that democratic movement which eighteenth-century thinkers did much to forward; and to this side of their work Shelley attached himself with special predilection. In no sense was he at this period an independent thinker. Deeply dissatisfied with the condition of society around him, and with the traditional creeds and doctrines, which had been presented to him in forms lacking true vitality, he caught up the opinions of those teachers who made the largest and loudest promises for the happiness of man; he attempted to weld these into a self-consistent whole, and failed in the impossible attempt. But at least he coloured them with the hues of his own sentiment

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and imagination. Atheist he would doubtless have named himself; yet he sang the praises of a universal Spirit of nature, acting necessarily, but forwarding the ends of wisdom and of righteousness. A disciple of French materialism, he yet looked forward not merely to a happier earth for future generations of men, but dared to expect an immortality for the individual soul.\* A utilitarian in creed, his ethics were passionately disinterested. "Although, like you," he wrote to Godwin (July 29, 1812), "an irreconcilable enemy to the system of self-love, both from a feeling of its deformity and a conviction of its falsehood, I can by no means conceive how the loftiest disinterestedness is incompatible with the strictest materialism. In fact, the doctrine which affirms that there is no such thing as matter, and that which affirms that all is matter, appear to me perfectly indifferent in the question between benevolence and self-love. I cannot see how they interfere with each other, or why the two doctrines of materialism and disinterestedness cannot be held in one mind as independently of each other, as the two truths that a cricket-ball is round and a box square." It is interesting to note that notwithstanding his arguments against classical studies addressed to Godwin, and his regard for such writers as Holbach and Helvétius, among the books ordered from Hookham during Shelley's residence at Tanyrallt are Marcus Aurelius, Seneca, and Plato.†

The study of history—English, Greek, and Roman—and that of our elder poets and prose writers, had been earnestly recommended to Shelley by William Godwin. He did not propose to feed his disciple with abstract doctrines or philosophies of history; his trust was that Shelley might make

\* At different periods of life his hopes and fears on the subject of the immortality of the soul variously predominated.

† Hogg dates the fragment which contains this request December 21, 1812; but I can find no evidence of the date on the fragment itself. I believe the fragment to have been written on December 17, after Shelley had posted an order for a long list of books to be procured by Hookham.]

acquaintance with what is most noble and admirable in human character and human achievement. To see this in act and in example, he writes, "is perhaps superior to all the theories and speculations that can possibly be formed." The great writers of the Elizabethan age he commended to Shelley's attention because they were thinkers—"every line is pregnant with sense, and the reader is inevitably put to the expense of thinking likewise." "*You*," said Godwin, who had read in manuscript a portion of "*Queen Mab*," "have what appears to me a false taste in poetry. You love a perpetual sparkle and glittering, such as are to be found in Darwin, and Southey, and Scott, and Campbell."\* Shelley's interest in history was faint; he conceived it in a series of visions—visions which were thrown before him, as it were, by the phantasmagoria of his own imagination. Empires rose and fell as if by the power of earthquakes, and anarchs stalked huge across the scene, and priests were banded in dark conclaves, and patriot martyrs endured the agony; and then the series was exhausted, and the same pictures were shown over again. "Facts," Shelley afterwards said, in a beautiful and characteristic passage, "are not what we want to know in poetry, in history, in the lives of individual men, in satire or panegyric. They are the mere divisions, the arbitrary points on which we hang, and to which we refer those delicate and evanescent hues of mind, which language delights and instructs us in precise proportion as it expresses."† But, under the influence of Godwin's authority, Shelley determined to toil against the current of his genius, and to strive to attain at least some general knowledge of past events. Almost immediately on receiving Godwin's letter of advice Shelley wrote to Hookham, requesting him to send a selection from

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\* December 10, 1812. Godwin's letter is printed by Lady Shelley, "*Shelley Memorials*," pp. 45-48. Southey, Scott, and Campbell are names aptly chosen by Godwin, for each in some degree influenced Shelley's early poetry.

† Fragment of a letter, printed by Mrs. Shelley as a note to Shelley's letter to John Gisborne, November 16, 1819.



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the books recommended by his philosophic guide, together with certain others of his own choice. The place of honour was given to metaphysics. The works of Edmund Spenser were included, as representative of what is best in the poetry of that age towards which Godwin had specially directed his attention. "Subjoined is a list of books," wrote Shelley, "which I wish you to send me very soon. I am determined to apply myself to a study that is hateful and disgusting to my very soul, but which is above all studies necessary for him who would be listened to as a mender of antiquated abuses. I mean that record of crimes and miseries—history. You see that the metaphysical works to which my heart hankers are not numerous in this list. One thing you will take care of for me—that those standard and reputable works on history, etc., be of the cheapest possible editions. With respect to metaphysical works I am less scrupulous." \* The names of Kant and Spinoza stand at the head of Shelley's list, which also includes Hume's "Essays," and Darwin's "Zoonomia." Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, and Plutarch, recommended by Godwin, and of which Shelley desired to have translations into Latin or English, as well as the original texts, are supplemented by Gillie's "History of Greece," and Vertot's "History of Rome." † Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" would serve as a broad viaduct between the ancient and modern worlds. For a narrative of events in our own country, Shelley was content to rely on Hume, with Adolphus's "History of England from the Accession of George III. to 1783" for the more recent period. Here were resources and equipment for a vigorous raid into the alien territory of history. Shelley's list, which did not omit to specify the "Faerie Queene," closes with some miscellaneous works of interest—Count Rumford "On Stoves," Moor's "Hindu Pantheon," and Southey's "History of Brazil."

\* Tanyrallt, December 17, 1812.

† Shelley writes, "Vertot (French) *Histoire de la Rome*," meaning the "*Révolutions romaines*."

The months thus occupied with various studies, with political propagandism by the novel methods of bottle and balloon, and with generous effort on behalf of the embankment scheme and of the suffering poor, were not fruitless of literary enterprise and endeavour, in bringing which to a successful issue Shelley looked for help from his new friend, the publisher Hookham. Whether any serious effort was made to publish Shelley's "Pieces of Irish History," we know not; but his interest in Irish affairs did not cease with his departure from Dublin. On August 18 he forwarded to Hookham copies of the two Irish pamphlets, acknowledging that they had but partial success in Ireland (no publisher having had an interest in their sale), and requesting Hookham's opinion as to the probable result of publishing them in London as one pamphlet, with an explanatory preface, and certain "suggestions" for forming associations which during his residence in Ireland had been drawn up in manuscript. "They would find their way," adds Shelley, "to Dublin." "I send you," he writes in the same letter, "a copy of a work which I have procured from America, and which I am exceedingly anxious should be published. It develops, as you will perceive by the most superficial reading, the actual state of republicanized Ireland, and appears to me above all things calculated to remove the prejudices which have too long been cherished of that oppressed country, [and] to strike the oppressors with dismay." No other clue beside these words remains by which to trace out and identify this work which Shelley regarded as so beneficent and so formidable. "I shall, if possible," goes on Shelley, still addressing Hookham, "prepare a volume of essays, moral and *religious*, by November; but all my manuscripts now being in Dublin, and from peculiar circumstances not immediately obtainable, I do not know whether I can." The manuscripts were, in fact, in the hands of the Dublin publisher, Stockdale; he had undertaken to publish a volume of Shelley's verse, and perhaps a portion of

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this collection of short poems had been put into type. Stockdale, on Shelley's quitting Ireland, demanded to be paid in advance—a demand with which it was not convenient to comply, and which appeared unreasonable to Shelley, for surely publishers are accustomed to wait for payment until an author's profits have come in. Such was not the opinion of Stockdale, who would neither proceed with his commission nor deliver up the author's manuscripts. It was not until December that Shelley heard that the long-lost manuscripts were on their way to London, whence he desired Hookham to forward them to Tremadoc.\*

In Shelley's letters of 1812-13 several references occur to a prose manuscript intended to have been published as a little volume, bearing the title "Biblical Extracts." We cannot be certain, but it seems not unlikely that Shelley's design was to exhibit the moral and spiritual teaching of Jesus, apart from theological dogma and the record of miracles. "I have met with some waverers between Christianity and Deism," he had written from Dublin to Miss Hitchener, on February 27, 1812. "I shall attempt to make them reject all the bad, and take all the good, of the Jewish books. I have often thought that the moral sayings of Jesus Christ might be very useful, if selected from the mystery and immorality which surrounds them: it is a little work I have in contemplation." For a brief space of time—certainly while preparing the notes of "Queen Mab"—Shelley was led to regard the founder of Christianity as an impostor. At a later date Jesus Christ appeared to him to be the most important of all religious teachers, abiding in closest harmony with that Spirit of energy and wisdom which is the ruling Power of the universe; a poet and a thinker, interpreting to us the highest truths; the enemy of falsehood and oppression; of meek and majestic demeanour; calm in danger; of natural and simple

\* Undated fragment of a letter beginning, "I write hastily again to-day," probably of the date December 17, 1812.

habits; beloved to adoration by his adherents; unmoved, solemn, and severe; yet gentle and benign.\* In 1812 he could not set forth the moral teaching of the Gospels without guarding his reader at the same time from what he deemed to be the mythology and immorality of the Bible. This, it would seem, he proposed to do by a preface. The whole would make a tiny volume about the size of Godwin's "Essay on Sepulchres." Possibly Eaton, now suffering imprisonment for his publication of the "Third Part of the Age of Reason," might be willing to become the publisher of "Biblical Extracts;" if not, a small edition of two hundred and fifty copies—perhaps for private distribution—might be produced under Hookham's superintendence. "Small Christmas or *Easter offerings* of a neat little book," wrote Shelley, "have frequently a surprising effect." In China the circulation of the Old and New Testaments had been proscribed by imperial edicts. "The Emperors of China," Shelley went on, "seem to form a singular exception to the usual doltishness of the regal race. I sympathize with his Imperial Majesty, but might not a preface be as efficacious in preventing the circulation of Biblical poison as a penal law."† Shelley's quarrel with historical Christianity, which he regarded as the fruitful parent of persecutions, wars, superstitions, frauds, intolerance, and ignoble asceticism, was intensified by his conviction that the Christian ethics are not purely disinterested, and that heaven and hell are put forward as a bribe and a threat to determine conduct which ought to be determined solely by an incorruptible love of virtue. By the close of January, 1813, he was expecting to find printed copies of the "Biblical Extracts" in a box which Hookham had promised to forward. Whether the manuscript was ever placed in a printer's hands we cannot tell; that it never issued from the press seems almost certain.

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\* The words used above are almost precisely those of Shelley in his "Essay on Christianity."

† To Hookham : Tanyrallt, January 2, 1813.

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We have seen that during the spring and summer Shelley was engaged upon "Queen Mab." Some lines of the ninth section of the poem occur in a letter addressed from Dublin to Miss Hitchener; a considerable fragment was sent in August by way of specimen from Lynmouth to the publisher Hookham; on the last day of October, 1812, Godwin made the entry in his diary, "Queen Mab, pp. 44," signifying, probably, that he had read by that day forty-four pages of Shelley's manuscript. Although the affairs of the embankment absorbed much of Shelley's time during part of the year 1813, he still worked at "Mab," when it was possible, and hoped soon to have his poem at an end. "I expect," he wrote to Hookham on January 16, "to have 'Queen Mab' and the other poems finished by March. 'Queen Mab' will be in ten cantos, and contain about 2600 lines.\* The other poems will contain probably as much more. The notes to 'Q. M.' will be long and philosophical. I shall take that opportunity, which I judge to be a safe one, of propagating my principles, which I decline to do syllogistically in a poem. A poem very didactic is, I think, very stupid.† And on February 7, to Hogg: "'Mab' has gone on but slowly, although she is nearly finished. They have teased me out of all poetry. With some restrictions I have taken your advice, though I have not been able to bring myself to rhyme. The didactic is in blank heroic verse, and the descriptive in blank lyrical measure. If an authority is of any weight in support of this singularity, Milton's 'Samson Agonistes,' the Greek choruses, and (you will laugh) Southey's 'Thalaba' may be adduced." "Since I wrote the above," the letter goes on towards its close, "I have

\* The figures in Shelley's letter are not quite clear, and may be 2800, which would agree more closely with the statement about the "other poems." The number of lines actually contained in "Queen Mab" is 2289.

† On June 5, 1811, Shelley wrote to Miss Hitchener, "My opinion is that all poetical beauty ought to be subordinate to the inculcated moral—that metaphorical language ought to be a pleasing vehicle for useful and momentous instruction." For Shelley's mature convictions on this subject, see the preface to "The Cenci."

finished the rough sketch of my poem. As I have not abated an iota of the infidelity or cosmopolity of it, sufficient will remain, exclusively of innumerable faults, invisible to partial eyes, to make it very unpopular. . . . I mean to subjoin copious philosophical notes." A few days later (February 19) Shelley informed Hookham that the poem was finished and transcribed. "I am now preparing the notes, which will be long and philosophical. You will receive it with the other poems. I think that the whole should form one volume; but of that we can speak hereafter."

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"Queen Mab," disclaimed by its author in 1821, when a pirated edition was given to the public, and described by him in a letter of that date as "villanous trash,"\* is noteworthy as the first serious attempt of Shelley's intellect and imagination to work together. Hitherto they had stood apart, and criticized each other. "Zastrozzi" and "St. Irvyne" were condemned by Shelley's understanding as the offspring of morbid sentiment and an overwrought fancy. From such a piece of naked reasoning as "The Necessity of Atheism" every imaginative element was purposely excluded. Now, for the first time, imagination and intellect went hand in hand—went hand in hand, for as yet they were not merged each into the other, and indissolubly united in one and the same existence. At times throughout "Queen Mab" phantasy has independent play; and because it is uninformed by the reason, the play of phantasy fails to attain a high degree of beauty, resembling more a stage transformation-scene than the vision of an inspired seer. Elsewhere in the poem some conclusion of the intellect is pressed home, while imagination and passion become mere servile instruments of the understanding; in such passages as these, Shelley sinks from the poet into the doctrinaire rhetorician—a rhetorician at times powerful and aggressive. But lines and periods and paragraphs occur in "Queen Mab" which are neither spectacular nor declamatory.

\* To Ollier: "Inasmuch as I recollect it is villanous trash."

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“For birth and life and death, and that strange state  
Before the naked soul has found its home,  
All tend to perfect happiness, and urge  
The restless wheels of being on their way,  
Whose flashing spokes, instinct with infinite life,  
Bicker and burn to gain their destined goal.”

In these lines, and others of a like kind, one may discover a presage of “Prometheus Unbound.” “Queen Mab,” which is very far from being a great poem, is also far from being “villanous trash.” A certain moral shallowness, indeed, makes it comparatively uninteresting (and the same remark applies to many of its author’s later writings), a moral shallowness arising from the view of evil as having existence less in human character than in institutions, laws, governments, and generally in things external to the conscience and the will. That Shelley had crude notions about the history of the world, the origin of civil institutions, of religions, and much beside, is obvious on the hastiest survey; that he had taken a merely one-sided and therefore a flagrantly unjust view of the Jewish and the Christian religions is equally obvious; and it is not difficult to show that his own theory of the universe is fatally cracked and rent by internal flaws and fissures. Nevertheless the poem has value even when regarded as an imaginative setting forth of important truths. Seldom before in English poetry had the unity of nature and the universality of law—the idea of a cosmos—been expressed with more precision or a more ardent conviction. Seldom before in poetry had the vast and ceaseless flow of Being—restless yet subject to a constant law of evolution and development—been so vividly conceived. Nature, or, as Shelley preferred to say, the Spirit of Nature, acting necessarily, and at present producing indifferently good and evil, giving birth alike to the hero, the martyr, the bigot, the tyrant, poisonous serpent and innocent lamb, yet tends unconsciously upward to nobler developments, purging itself

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of what is weak and base. Shelley's spirit, which circles half mournfully, half exultingly above the ruins of the past, which rises on the wing and screams at sight of all the oppressions and frauds done under the sun in this our day, flies to the future and embraces it with a lover's joy. He is already enamoured of the ideal. His faith in the possibility of a better life of man did not die away; it inspires the "Hellas" and "Prometheus;" it is the faith which has inspired the saints and martyrs and confessors of our century. The good man, according to Shelley in "Queen Mab," is he who co-operates with nature, and has a share in its forward tendency; he is resolute yet meek, gentle but of unalterable will; he commands not nor obeys, but steers right on towards his goal, impelled by "a quenchless desire of universal happiness," an enthusiasm of humanity. This conception remained with Shelley, and was embodied in his "Laon" and his "Prometheus." That his ideal of the future golden age may be smiled at by common sense as impracticable and impossible, need give us small offence. In following the sun he loses his way in a radiant cloudland; yet still, amid bright voluminous folds of error, he is on the track of the sun. That Shelley was sanguine enough to hope for the day when law might be replaced by love, is only a sign that he was one of those who, having caught sight in a vision—half false, half true—of a far-off gospel dispensation, in which order shall follow from a law of love, are rashly prepared to bid farewell to old Mr. Legality before his discipline has qualified men to walk by the guidance of Mr. Evangelist. Such precipitancy may constitute a grave offence against social morality, yet we may dare to love the offender. It is more difficult to understand how Shelley, who did not willingly give pain to a worm, should eagerly wound devout religious spirits in their tenderest part. The explanation is that he could not, at this period, hold two truths together in his head, or two feelings together in his heart. Christianity, whence sprang wars, persecutions, bigotries, hypocrisies,



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intellectual tyranny, appeared to him to be an impious worm ; it must be for the happiness of men that he should strive to wound the evil thing to the death. To all the noble and gentle lives, all the sweet and heroic deaths which had clasped to their breasts the cross of Christ, Shelley, who could see but one side of things, was blind. This may, indeed, move a just indignation. But those who in general make loudest outcry against such an offender as Shelley are precisely the persons whose grieved susceptibilities are in no true sense religious ; persons whose solid conformity with things as they are would receive no crueller shock than if the founder of Christianity were himself to appear in their midst.

“ You will receive ‘ Queen Mab ’ with the other poems,” Shelley wrote to Hookham on February 19, 1813 ; “ I think that the whole should form one volume.” In mid-December he had been preparing the manuscript of these poems, which would contain, he reckoned, some two thousand and six hundred lines of verse.\* “ My poems,” he had written to Hookham (January 2, 1813), “ will, I fear, little stand the criticism even of friendship ; some of the later ones [perhaps “ Queen Mab ” is included in this reference] have the merit of conveying a meaning in every word, and all are faithful pictures of my feelings at the time of writing them. But they are in a great measure abrupt and obscure—all breathing hatred to government and religion, but, I think, not too openly for publication. One fault they are indisputably exempt from, that of being a volume of *fashionable literature*. I doubt not but your friendly hand will clip the wings of my Pegasus considerably.” Hitherto Shelley has been represented as a poet, for the interval between “ St. Irvyne ” or the “ Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson ” and “ Queen Mab,” by some of the crudest and feeblest of his verses, or by mere fragments which give some incomplete evidence that he was capable of producing better things. No poem written before “ Alastor ” can

\* December 17, 1812, and January 26, 1813.

be expected to add to Shelley's poetical glory, but it is well that his years of nonage should be rightly conceived as a period of gradually expanding powers, and of progressive education in his art. Happily his manuscript book containing the pieces intended for publication in the spring of 1813 is in existence, and the history of Shelley's imagination from the days at Oxford to the days at Tremadoc is no longer a blank.\* With the exception of five short pieces subsequently added by Harriet, the poems are in Shelley's handwriting; up to the point where the collection designed for publication by Hookham closes, the lines were counted by Shelley (not without a characteristic error in reckoning), and the total number, as given by him (2322) agrees closely with the estimate furnished to Hookham in his letter of January 26, 1813.

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Of the shorter poems several may be described as occasional, and with some of these the reader of this biography has already made acquaintance. Several are direct inspirations—never transcripts—from external nature, and seek to render into words some of the emotion caused by its beauty, or wonder, or terror. Now it is an exquisite spring day, with influence felt in the nerves and in the blood as a keen yet universal thrill of desire and delight; now a day of late winter, which seems to anticipate the vernal rapture, yet is fated to be pursued and defeated by tempest and rains. Or Shelley is alone amid the desolation of the hills, and would fain confront the awful Spirit of the wild, waste places. Or he wanders forth on the sabbath morning, away from the church and church-goers, through a "mountain labyrinth of loveliness," meditating on the worship and religion of "the man sincerely good," to whom every day is a sabbath day—

"Consigned to thoughts of holiness,  
And deeds of living love."

\* The volume is in possession of Mr. Esdaile, by whose permission I notice its contents. Two leaves have unhappily been torn away; otherwise the volume is in excellent condition.

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 lover waiting for the breeze to blow her true-love to her arms.  
 Other poems express the ardour of his affection for Harriet, and  
 in these there is a spiritual quality not always to be found in  
 poetry which tells of the passion of boy and girl. She who is  
 dear to him can be dear only because she is his purer soul, and  
 the meeting of eyes, the touch of lips, are precious because these  
 are occasions and emblems of the union of two ardent spirits  
 panting together after high ends. In contrast with such  
 hymns of love as these, Shelley sings of the savage solitude  
 and isolation of the wretch who cannot love his fellows:—

“Not the swarth Pariah in some Indian grove,  
 Lone, lean, and hunted by his brothers’ hate,  
 Hath drunk so deep the cup of bitter fate.”

And his own sympathies flow forth at the thought of the wrongs and woes of men; at the imagined sight of womanhood in anguish and despair; or at some tale from real life of the sorrows of the oppressed poor.\* Or he contemplates the saviours, and the destroyers of human happiness, those whose strength has been given to bless or to ban their kind—the warrior, the conqueror, the tyrant, and, over against these, the patriot-martyr by whose grave he muses. Or he sings a chant of freedom, and heartens himself against the fall of the champions of righteousness by the faith that death, which subdues all else, is powerless against virtue, truth, and love. Or he gazes into the future, expecting in the darkest midnight of doubt and fear a sudden dayspring.

\* “A Tale of Society as it is from facts: 1811,” of which a fragment has been printed, is given in full by Shelley’s manuscript. It also gives the complete translation of “La Marseillaise,” of which one stanza has been printed from a letter to Edward Graham. Having copied his best short pieces, Shelley falls back on the Oxford poems suggested by the story of Hogg’s friend Mary, and on the pieces written in the winter of 1810-11, which are strikingly inferior both in form and feeling to the poems of a later date.

"Then may we hope the consummating hour,  
Dreadfully, swiftly, sweetly, is arriving,  
When light from darkness, peace from desolation,  
Bursts unresisted."

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Or his gaze reverts to the past, and he sees Desolation and Oblivion dwelling in the ruined palaces of mighty kings, and draws from the silence and horror auguries of solemn hope. Two narrative poems of considerable length exhibit Shelley at work on material which needs a firmer and calmer hand than his in early years to fashion it into forms of beauty; yet each contains some well-wrought stanzas. "Henry and Louisa," a poem in two parts, with the motto "She died for love, and he for glory," is a tale of war, and in passing from the first to the second part, the scene changes from England to the Egyptian battle-field. Henry, borne from his lover's arms by the insane lust of conquest and of glory, is pursued by Louisa, who finds him dying on the bloody sands, and, like Shakspeare's Juliet, is swift to pursue her beloved through the portals of the grave. "The stanza of this poem," wrote Shelley in a note, "is radically that of Spenser, although I suffered myself at the time of writing it to be led into occasional deviations." "Zeinab and Kathema," a poem in six-line stanzas, is also a tragedy of love and death, very crude and ghastly-grotesque in some of its details. In the summer of 1811 Shelley had read with great admiration Miss Owenson's novel "The Missionary." From this may have come the suggestion to choose as the heroine of his poem a maiden of Cashmire, borne away from her native home by Christian guile and rapine. Kathema follows his betrothed Zeinab to England.

"Meanwhile thro' calm and storm, thro' night and day,  
Unvarying in her aim the vessel went,  
As if some inward spirit ruled her way  
And her tense sails were conscious of intent,  
Till Albion's cliffs gleamed o'er her plunging bow,  
And Albion's river-floods bright sparkled round her prow."

CHAP. VII. But Zeinab had been flung to perish upon the streets by her betrayers, had risen in crime against those who caused her ruin, and had suffered death by the vengeance of indiscriminating and pitiless laws. It is a bitter December evening when Kathema, weary with vain search for his beloved, sinks wearily upon the heath. At the moment of his awaking, the winter moonbeams fall upon a dead and naked female form, swinging in chains from a gibbet, while her dark hair tosses in the wind, and ravenous birds of prey cry in the ear of night. The lover recognizes his Zeinab, and is seized with madness; he scales the gibbet, and, twining the chains around his neck, leaps forward "to meet the life to come." Here is romantic ghastliness, as imagined by a boy, in extravagant profusion; but at heart each of the two poems is designed less as a piece of romantic art than as an indictment of widespread evils—the one, a setting forth of the criminal lust of glory and conquest; the other, a setting forth of the cruelty of sensual passion and the injustice of formally administered laws. A soliloquy of that ancient outcast and undying martyr, the Wandering Jew, brings to a close the gathering of pieces intended for Hookham's consideration. We trace in these early poems influences, in various degrees, derived from Southey, Campbell, Wordsworth, Scott. The collection, which is introduced by the dedication to Harriet afterwards prefixed to "Queen Mab" (and here given with some differences of phrasing), opens with a series of poems in unrhymed stanzas, the use of which Shelley had learnt from Southey's early volumes. Such lines as those to Liberty—

"And the spirits of the brave  
Shall start from every grave,  
Whilst from her Atlantic throne  
Freedom sanctifies the groan  
That fans the glorious fires of its change"—

are a direct reminiscence from "Ye Mariners of England" and "The Battle of the Baltic." Beside the dedication, one

other poem was transferred to "Queen Mab" from this manuscript book—the dialogue between Falsehood and Vice, which Shelley gave in a note to "Queen Mab," intimating that it was there printed because it expressed strongly his abhorrence of despotism and falsehood, and no other opportunity would probably occur of rescuing it from oblivion. We may infer that when the sheets of "Queen Mab" were going through the press Shelley had already abandoned his intention of printing the shorter pieces. One of these, and only one, appeared subsequently with his sanction—that which expresses with subtle power the sense of mystery which belongs to man's life and death, and exhorts us to endure the mystery courageously; the poem opening with the lines—

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"The pale, the cold, and the moony smile  
Which the meteor beam of a stormy night  
Sheds on a lonely and sea-girt isle  
Till the dawning of morn's undoubted light  
Is the flame of life so fickle and wan  
That flits round our steps till their strength is gone."

This, with a revised text, formed one of the sheaf of poems which accompanied "Alastor" into the world; and Shelley's good judgment appeared in his selection of this from his early pieces, for it certainly touches a higher level than any other of those which preceded "Queen Mab."

Shelley's residence at Tremadoc was suddenly and strangely brought to a close. On the night of Friday, February 26, as stated by Shelley and Harriet—a night of storm and rain—the lonely house of Tanyralt was entered by some villain bent on outrage. Shelley, hearing a noise, descended, pistols in hand, from his bedroom. Shots were fired, and a hand-to-hand struggle ensued, which ended with the escape of Shelley's antagonist. Later in the night—towards the wild March morning—a second attempt at assassination was made, from which Shelley escaped unhurt in life or limb, but much shaken in nerves. Next day Shelley, Harriet, and Eliza quitted Tany-

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On the day after the nocturnal attack, Shelley endeavoured to address a letter to Hookham; but, having written a line or two, he was unable to continue, in consequence of nervous excitement. He desired to receive back for his immediate needs the £20 intended to have been applied to Leigh Hunt's benefit. A postscript by Harriet confirmed his statement respecting the attempted assassination.

*Shelley to Hookham.*

MY DEAR SIR,

I have just escaped an atrocious assassination. Oh! send the £20 if you have it. You will perhaps hear of me no more.

friend,

PERCY SHELLEY.

*[Postscript by Harriet Shelley.]*

Mr. Shelley is so dreadfully nervous to-day from having been up all night, that I am afraid what he has written will alarm you very much. We intend to leave this place as soon as possible, as our lives are not safe so long as we remain. It is no common robber we dread, but a person who is actuated by revenge, and who threatens my life and my sister's as well. If you can send us the money, it will greatly add to our comfort.

Sir, I remain your sincere friend,

H. SHELLEY.

Immediately Hookham sent the much-desired succour, and Shelley's heart, wounded by doubts and unfriendly suspicions among the Tremadoc folk whom he had sought so earnestly to serve, overflowed in gratitude and gladness.

*Shelley to Hookham.*

Bangor Ferry, March 6, 1813.

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MY DEAR FRIEND,

In the first stage of our journey towards Dublin we met with your letter. How shall I express to you what I felt of gratitude, surprise, and pleasure? Not so much that the remittance rescued us from a situation of peculiar perplexity, but that one there was who, by disinterested and unhesitating confidence, made amends to our feelings, wounded by the suspicion, coldness, and villany of the world. If the discovery of truth be a pleasure of singular purity, how far surpassing is the discovery of virtue!

I am now recovered from an illness brought on by watching, fatigue, and alarm; and we are proceeding to Dublin to dissipate the unpleasing impressions associated with the scene of our alarm. We expect to be there on the 8th. You shall then hear the detail of our distresses. The ball of the assassin's pistol (he fired at me twice) penetrated my night-gown and pierced the wainscot. He is yet undiscovered, though not unsuspected, as you will learn from my next.

Unless you knew us all more intimately, you could not conceive with what fervour and sincerity my wife and sister join with me to you in gratitude and esteem.

Yours ever faithfully and affectionately,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

P.S.—Tho' overwhelmed by our own distresses, we are by no means indifferent to those of liberty and virtue. From the tenor of your letter I augur that you have applied the £20 I sent to the benefit of the Hunts; I am anxious to hear further of the success of this experiment. My direction is—35, Great Cuffe Street, Stephen's Green, Dublin, Ireland. By your kindness and generosity we are perfectly relieved from all pecuniary difficulties. We only wanted a little breathing-time, which the rapidity of our persecutions was unwilling to allow us. We shall readily repay the £20 when I hear from my correspondent in London; but when can I repay the friendship, the disinterestedness, and the zeal of your confidence?

From Dublin, a few days later, Harriet Shelley communicated to Hookham the promised details.



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Apr. 1813.*Harriet Shelley to Hookham.*

35, Cuffe Street, Stephen's Green, Dublin, March 11 [1813].

MY DEAR SIR,

We arrived here last Tuesday [March 9], after a most tedious passage of forty hours, during the whole of which time we were dreadfully ill. I am afraid no diet will prevent us from the common lot of suffering when obliged to take a sea voyage.

Mr. S. promised you a recital of the horrible events that caused us to leave Wales. I have undertaken the task, as I wish to spare him, in the present nervous state of his health, everything that can recall to his mind the horrors of that night, which I will relate.

On Friday night, the 26th of February, we retired to bed between ten and eleven o'clock. We had been in bed about half an hour, when Mr. S. heard a noise proceeding from one of the parlours. He immediately went downstairs with two pistols, which he had loaded that night, expecting to have occasion for them. He went into the billiard-room, where he heard footsteps retreating; he followed into another little room, which was called an office. He there saw a man in the act of quitting the room through a glass window which opens into the shrubbery. The man fired at Mr. S., which he avoided. Bysshe then fired, but it flashed in the pan. The man then knocked Bysshe down, and they struggled on the ground. Bysshe then fired his second pistol, which he thought wounded him in the shoulder, as he uttered a shriek and got up, when he said these words: "By God, I will be revenged! I will murder your wife; I will ravish your sister! By God, I will be revenged!" He then fled—as we hoped for the night. Our servants were not gone to bed, but were just going, when this horrible affair happened. This was about eleven o'clock. We all assembled in the parlour, where we remained for two hours. Mr. S. then advised us to retire, thinking it impossible he would make a second attack. We left Bysshe and our manservant, who had only arrived that day, and who knew nothing of the house, to sit up. I had been in bed three hours when I heard a pistol go off. I immediately ran downstairs, when I perceived that Bysshe's flannel gown had been shot through, and the window-curtain. Bysshe had sent Daniel to see what hour it was, when he heard a noise at the window. He went there, and a man thrust his arm through the glass and fired at

him. Thank Heaven! the ball went through his gown and he remained unhurt. Mr. S. happened to stand sideways; had he stood fronting, the ball must have killed him. Bysshe fired his pistol, but it would not go off; he then aimed a blow at him with an old sword, which we found in the house. The assassin attempted to get the sword from him, and just as he was pulling it away, Dan rushed into the room, when he made his escape.

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This was at four in the morning. It had been a most dreadful night; the wind was as loud as thunder, and the rain descended in torrents. Nothing has been heard of him: and we have every reason to believe it was no stranger, as there is a man of the name of Leeson, who the next morning that it happened went and told the shopkeepers of Tremadoc that it was a tale of Mr. Shelley's to impose upon them, that he might leave the country without paying his bills. This they believed, and none of them attempted to do anything towards his discovery.

We left Tanyrallt on Saturday, and stayed, till everything was ready for our leaving the place, at the Solicitor-General of the county's house, who lived seven miles from us. This Mr. Leeson has been heard to say that he was determined to drive us out of the country. He once happened to get hold of a little pamphlet which Mr. S. had printed in Dublin; this he sent up to Government. In fact, he was for ever saying something against us, and that because we were determined not to admit him to our house, because we had heard his character; and from many acts of his we found that he was malignant and cruel to the greatest degree.

The pleasure we experienced at reading your letter you may conceive at the same time when every one seemed to be plotting against us.\*

Pardon me if I wound your feelings by dwelling on this subject. Your conduct has made a deep impression upon our minds, which no length of time can erase. Would that all mankind were like thee!

The Tanyrallt outrage has been a perplexity to Shelley's biographers. Was the assassin real, or a creation of the brain? It is certain that on more than one occasion Shelley was the

\* The paper is here clipped or torn, and the following words remain: "When those whom we had . . . the horrible suspicion . . . from the task when called upon in a moment like that."

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victim of his own overwrought sensibility, and suffered from the persecution of phantasies, against which Peacock's materialistic prescription, "three mutton chops well peppered," might have supplied a suitable prophylactic. The short and easy method, accordingly, of explaining away whatever is strange or obscure in the incidents of Shelley's life is obvious, and has been found convenient. In the present instance there can be no doubt that Shelley's mind was to a certain degree unhinged; but we cannot now determine whether this was the cause of a train of fantastic illusions, or the consequence of an actual struggle for life with a desperate assailant. "I was in North Wales in the summer of 1813," wrote Peacock, "and heard the matter much talked of. Persons who had examined the premises on the following morning had found that the grass of the lawn appeared to have been much trampled and rolled on, but there were no footmarks on the wet ground, except between the beaten spot and the window; and the impression of the ball on the wainscot showed that the pistol had been fired towards the window and not from it. This appeared conclusive as to the whole series of operations having taken place from within." \* Of a struggle out of doors upon the grass, Harriet's letter to Hookham gives no information; but the information needed to render Peacock's statement intelligible is supplied by Mrs. Williams, writing in 1860 from a recollection of her husband's talk of forty years before. "My husband has often talked to me about 'Shelley's ghost,' as it used at the time I married, in 1820, to be the topic of conversation among strangers who used to visit this place. They were seldom satisfied, as my kind husband never used to talk of Mr. Shelley to people who only wished to gratify their curiosity. His answer was, 'He was my friend;' but to me he often said that he believed that there was no attempt at burglary, or was there anything like an apparition at Tany-

\* This last argument, as has been observed, is far from conclusive, for three shots are said to have been fired, one by Shelley himself.

rallt at the time alluded to; it was all produced by heated imagination. . . . Mr. Williams was sent for, and found Mr. Shelley in a sad state of distress and excitement; he had fancied that he saw a man's face on the drawing-room window; he took his pistol and shot the glass to shivers, and then bounced out on the grass, and there he saw leaning against a tree the ghost, or, as he said, the devil; and to show Mr. Williams what he had seen, he took his pen and ink and sketched the figure on the screen, where it is at this moment, showing plainly that his mind was astray. . . . When I add that Mr. Shelley set fire to the wood to burn the apparition (with some trouble they were saved), you may suppose it was not all right with him." There is enough here to convince us that either as cause or consequence of the horror of the night Shelley's thick-coming fancies painfully oppressed him. The sense of a terrible reality, however, was not transitory with him; in after years he ascribed the spasms of physical agony from which he suffered to an injury caused by the pressure on his body of the Tanyrallt assassin's knee;\* and Mrs. Godwin, alleging Jane Clairmont as her informant, declared that there were days on which he believed that he was still dogged by Leeson, his Tanyrallt enemy, and feared in consequence to walk out alone.† On the night of alarm, Shelley retired to bed, as Harriet mentions in her letter to Hookham, with loaded pistols, expecting to have need of them before morning. We may well suppose that Shelley's Irish manservant, Dan Healey, who had arrived at Tanyrallt a few hours previously, after having completed his six months' imprisonment in Barnstaple gaol, was in a communicative

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\* Thornton Hunt, "Shelley by One who knew him," *Atlantic Monthly*, February, 1863, pp. 185, 186.

† Mrs. Godwin to Lady Mountcashell, February 15, 1815. Mrs. Godwin's word does not carry much weight with it; but here her statement falls in with the fact that Shelley—as shown from the diary—was frequently accompanied in his walks by Jane Clairmont. Mrs. Godwin adds that Harriet was always angry when Leeson was named, and used to say that her husband wanted to frighten her, and for long she was frightened; but Peacock told her it was untrue.

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mood; and it is not improbable that questions had been put to him respecting his master which suggested to Dan, what was indeed the fact, that Shelley was regarded in the little Devonshire town as a dangerous criminal, and had been under the observation of the authorities. Shelley may have thought it probable that Dan had been tracked from Barnstaple to Tremadoc by some emissary of the authorities. Dark suspicions with regard to Leeson might revive under the influence of Dan's rumours and reports. For Leeson, at least, was no phantom of the brain. Leeson, an eminently loyal and disagreeable Englishman, who had learnt in the early Tremadoc days from effusive Miss Hitchener of Shelley's authorship of a seditious pamphlet, and the risk of a Government prosecution; "an envious, unfeeling sort of man," declares Mrs. Williams, "not very particular what he said of any one," and who had charged Shelley to the face with his utterance of sedition,\*—what might not Leeson attempt against an enemy of the Government, perhaps with secret encouragement from those in power? And it is really not impossible that Leeson, with his officious loyalty, may have been in communication with Government respecting Shelley, as were the mayor and town-clerk of Barnstaple—may have been directed to keep an eye on the dangerous young man, and may have done some amateur espionage on a neighbour whom he disliked. If the assassin were one of flesh and blood, and other than a common burglar—and the burglar at that date did a fairly brisk business all over England during the winter nights—may we not accept in a modified form Shelley's theory as not wholly improbable? May not some sturdy loyalist in Leeson's employ, whose attention had been directed towards the treasonable occupant of Tanyrallt, have overstepped the bounds of his commission, and, tempted by the boisterous weather and

\* Mrs. Williams is precise on this point. "When Mr. Shelley asked for his informant, Mr. Leeson pointed to my husband; but when the three met, Mr. Leeson made an apology, and confessed he had been told by Miss Hitchener."

the lonely situation of the house, have thought to enrich a true king's man at the expense of his country's enemy, whose possession of wealth had lately been demonstrated by the promise of a liberal subscription to the embankment fund? The villain, it is true, was seen by no one except Shelley; but flesh-and-blood burglars have a modesty which generally hinders them from presenting themselves before an assembled company. Unless ingeniously awkward or deliberately fraudulent, Shelley could hardly have pierced his night-gown with the ball of his own pistol; and Harriet's statement throughout has an air of sincerity. Miss Westbrook "often in after years," it is said, "related the circumstance as a frightful fact."\* Leeson's cruel assertion that Shelley invented the entire story as an excuse for escaping from his creditors in Tremadoc, is sufficiently disproved—if disproof were needed—by the state of nervous excitement in which Shelley was found next morning by Williams, and by his account of the ghost or demon on the lawn, a feature of the tale obviously tending to discredit all the rest with persons of sober judgment.†

Adrift once more, like a cloud anchored for a time to the Welsh mountain-height and suddenly loosened from its anchorage, whither should Shelley now be blown? Why not westward across the Irish Sea? To settle in London, near Godwin and the Newtons, would indeed have been a

\* Lady Shelley, "Shelley Memorials," p. 56. Lady Shelley's authority was Mrs. Edaile, the daughter of Shelley and Harriet. I see no shadow of evidence to connect Miss Hitchener with the alleged outrage (McCarthy's theory); nor do I believe that there is any ground for supposing that Dan was trying to frighten his master (Hogg's suggestion favoured by Mr. Rossetti).

† As to Leeson's possible connection with the outrage, it must be mentioned that Mrs. Williams says that no one at Tanyrallt connected him with it at the time. Medwin's statement that Shelley went before Mr. Madocks as magistrate next day and made a deposition of the facts, is probably an error. Mrs. Williams says that Mr. Madocks was absent during the whole of Shelley's residence at Tanyrallt. Among those of Shelley's friends to whom he recounted by letter the nocturnal adventure, were Mr. and Mrs. Newton, who agreed with Mr. Williams and others in setting it down as an hallucination.

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happy arrangement; but at present Shelley needed complete change, and was not disposed for a little while to settle anywhere. Harriet still remained enthusiastically Irish in her sympathies, and she had friends in Dublin whom she desired to see. Perhaps already, although no hint of this was given in letters to Hogg, they had some notion of a possible visit to the lakes of Killarney. Their movements hitherto had been largely influenced by a craving for beauty of landscape; they had seen something of Scotland, the lakes of Cumberland, North and South Wales, the romantic sea-coast of Devon. Why should not Killarney, with its enchantment of lake and island and mountain, draw them towards itself? Hitherto in Ireland they had seen only the decaying grandeurs and living squalor of Dublin; now, having rested for a while with friends in the Irish capital, they were to journey southward on no political mission, but merely in search of beauty and of joy.\*

In Cuffe Street, Stephen's Green, now a dingy byway, but inhabited in 1813 by sufficiently well-to-do citizens—barristers, proctors, and attorneys—resided Shelley's friend, "honest Jack Lawless," and from the house of Lawless Harriet's letter to Hookham is dated. Perhaps Shelley stayed with Mr. and Mrs. Lawless, or found lodgings in the same street. Before starting for Killarney he was himself able to write to Hookham, and to forward the complete manuscript of "Queen Mab," the printing of which he hoped might proceed while he was engaged in preparing the notes.

*Shelley to Hookham.*

MY DEAR SIR,

Harriet related to you the mysterious events which caused our departure from Tanyrallt. I was at that time so nervous and unsettled as to be wholly incapable of the task. Do

\* Hogg, writing from memory, states that Shelley announced his intention of returning direct to London, in company with him, after a short stay in Dublin; but as a fact Shelley did not inform Hogg of his plans, incurring thereby the accusation of reserve.

not, however, conceive that for one moment I lose the grateful recollection of your kindness and attention.

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I send you my poem. To your remarks on its defects I shall listen and derive improvement. No duty of a friend is more imperious than an utter sincerity and unreservedness [in] criticism, and none of which a candid mind can be the object with more inward complacency and satisfaction. At the same time, in spite of its various errors, I am determined to give it to the world.\* . . . If you do not dread the arm of the law, or any exasperation of public opinion against yourself, I wish that it should be printed and published immediately.

The notes are preparing, and shall be forwarded before the completion of the printing of the poem. I have many other poems which shall also be sent. The notes will be long, philosophical, and anti-Christian. This will be unnoticed in a note.

Do not let the title-page be printed before the body of the poem. I have a motto to introduce from Shakespeare, and a preface.

I shall expect no success. Let only 250 copies be printed—a small neat quarto, on fine paper, and so as to catch the aristocrats. They will not read it, but their sons and daughters may.

All join in best feelings towards you.

Your faithful friend,

[P. B. SHELLEY.]

Of Shelley's second visit to Ireland little is known. On Tuesday, March 9, he reached Dublin; some ten days or a fortnight later he was in Killarney, and may have arrived there somewhat earlier. It was a boisterous season of the year, when budding branches would toss in the March breeze, and O'Donoghoe's white horses would race across the lakes, or champ upon the shore; but Shelley had found what he sought—a retreat of inward quietude with ever-varying beauty. He hired a cottage, situated, according to Hogg, on one of the islands of the lake.† He gathered his books about him, which

\* Here, for sake of Shelley's signature on the other side, an autograph-hunter snipped out a piece of the letter; the words remain, "I shall know at what a loss . . . all my future literary worth . . . erase the memory of its deficiencies."

† If Hogg be correct, the island was probably Ross Island, where, however, the presence of a barracks would not have proved an attraction to Shelley. Dinas



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were needed for the preparation of the notes to "Queen Mab." We do not find that the purple reeks, or Innisfallen with its ivied ruins, or the fantastic legends of the lakes, suggested to Shelley a single line of verse. The cottage life was not free from discomforts and annoyances; yet Shelley was not insensible to the loveliness which lay around him. Long afterwards, when wandering by the shores of the fairest of Italian lakes, his memory travelled back to Ireland in search of something more beautiful than aught else on which his eyes had rested. "Since I last wrote to you," he told Peacock, in April, 1818, "we have been to Como, looking for a house. This lake exceeds anything I ever beheld in beauty, with the exception of the arbutus islands of Killarney."

At Tanyrallt Shelley had looked forward with pleasure to a visit from Hookham, and a visit from Hogg. The invitation had been accepted by Hogg for the month of March, and having brought his mind to contemplate a journey to Carnarvonshire, it seemed a small matter to extend his travel a little further, and follow his friends to Dublin. But on inquiring for Shelley at No. 35, Cuffe Street, he learnt to his surprise and chagrin that the whole party—Bysshe, Harriet, Eliza, and a servant (probably the faithful Dan)—had taken flight, and were now at a distance of some nine score miles—Irish miles to be measured over rough Irish roads. Having heard of Hogg's arrival in Dublin, and perhaps having failed to persuade him to advance into the wilds, Shelley with quick remorse bade farewell to lakes and woods and arbutus islands on the evening of Monday, March 29, and, accompanied by Harriet, reached Cork on the following afternoon, just in time to catch the mail for Dublin. Six and twenty hours of jolting and rattling brought the jaded travellers to their destination. Now, however, it was their turn to suffer disappointment; for

Island possessed a woodranger's cottage. Ronayne's cottage had disappeared from Ronayne's Island by 1813. Weld's "Illustrations of the Scenery of Killarney" (1812) makes us acquainted with Killarney as seen by Shelley.

Hogg, having spent a week or ten days in Dublin, and heard loud praises of Mr. Percy Shelley, but having never seen his face, decided to return from whence he came, and had sailed the day before in the Post-office Packet for Holyhead. Shelley resolved to follow him to London with all possible speed. A brief delay was inevitable, for Shelley had not wherewithal to pay his way. "I must by some means raise money for the journey here," thus he wrote to Hogg; "but I am not one," he added, "to stick at difficulties." Probably in order that no question as to rent might be immediately raised Eliza Westbrook, with the servant, had remained at Killarney; there, too, remained Harriet's boxes, nor were these recovered for above a twelvemonth.\* But Shelley, rejoicing, if Hogg's account be true, to have escaped from the irksome presence of his sister-in-law, was once more upon the wing, and, having quickly vanquished all difficulties, again crossed the Irish Channel—now for the last time in his life—pressed forward, and on some evening early in April—probably on Monday, the fifth of the month—with Harriet by his side, entered the door of Mr. Westbrook's house in Chapel Street, Grosvenor Square.

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\* There are some minute difficulties as to dates. A letter to Williams (mainly occupied with comment on an indignant complaint from Miss Hitchener) is dated "35, Cuffe Street, March 30," and contains the words, "Harriet and Eliza unite in kind remembrances." Probably Eliza's name was introduced as a matter of form, or perhaps the letter was really written from Killarney, but dated from Dublin, because Shelley wished his letters to be addressed to Dublin, whence Lawless would forward them. If so Shelley dated the letter March 30, as if he were writing on that day from Dublin, although it must have been written two days earlier. Another perplexity arises from the date April 3, at the head of a letter to Hogg printed in "Life of Shelley," vol. ii. p. 258. It seems to be an error for April 1.

## CHAPTER VIII.

LONDON, BRACKNELL, EDINBURGH, AND WINDSOR  
(APRIL TO DECEMBER, 1813).

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1813. WHEN Hogg called on Shelley and his wife, a few days after their arrival in London, he found them not in Mr. Westbrook's house, but at Cooke's Hotel, Albemarle Street, Piccadilly. "They were both well, and in good spirits," he writes; "the lady was as bright, blooming, and placid as ever." Not a word was said of the outrage at Tanyrallt, but they were "brimful of the recollections of discomforts and miseries endured at Killarney," and complained bitterly of the fatigue, expense, and imposition from which they had suffered. "Bysshe discoursed with animation and eloquent astonishment of the perilous navigation of the lakes, of sudden gusts and treacherous whirlwinds," picturing Killarney as it may be seen on boisterous days in the month of daffodils. In an incredibly short time, says Hogg, Eliza reappeared—"mute, smiling, and languishing as before"—and resumed her sovereign functions. "Whether she lived constantly with them I was not exactly informed; it seemed rather that she went and came in a hushed, mystical manner." Harriet had not lost her old love of reading aloud, and she was in excellent voice. "She promptly seized every opportunity of indulging her taste; she took up the first book that came to hand as soon as I entered the room, and the reading com-

menced. Sir William Drummond's 'Academical Questions,' Smith's 'Theory of Moral Sentiments,' some of Bishop Berkeley's Works, Southey's 'Chronicle of the Cid,' had taken the place of Telemachus, Belisarius, Volney's 'Ruins,' and the other works which she had formerly read to me. Whenever Eliza made a descent upon us, silence was immediately proclaimed, and the book was carried away;" for Harriet was soon to be a mother, and must not exhaust her nervous power with the exercise of reading. As for Eliza herself, books were not an essential part of her daily existence; indeed, unless it might be Sir James Lawrence's edifying "History of the Nairs," declares Hogg, she never read anything.

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The hotel in Albemarle Street suited Shelley for several reasons. If Harriet should require her sister's attendance, and Eliza were not actually on the spot, she might easily come and go in her hushed, mystical manner, for her father's house in Chapel Street was near at hand. Still closer was the house of Shelley's good friend Hookham, the publisher of Old Bond Street, in whose hands he had placed, a few weeks since, the manuscript of "Queen Mab." An easy walk from Piccadilly, by the Green Park and Grosvenor Place, would bring Shelley to the delightful household in Chester Street—the Newtons—among whom he found the charms of kindred enthusiasm, refinement, affection, and gentle manners. "Shelley became almost a member of our family," writes Mr. Newton's daughter, referring to these and subsequent months, "where he seemed to have found a nook to his fancy. My mother, who was uncommonly musical (indeed, as Dussek said himself, his most gifted and best pupil), often passed her evenings playing with two of the first-rate musicians in London—Solomon and another. Dear Shelley was not endowed with every distinction, so instead of listening to the trios, he would take us children in a corner, and in a low and sepulchral voice would tell us spectre and hobgoblin stories, to which, of course, we listened with fixed interest and atten-

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tion.”\* Godwin and his family were, indeed, at a distance from Shelley’s present place of abode; but something like a temporary estrangement had taken place between the returned wanderers and the household in Skinner Street. Mrs. Godwin was discovered in her true colours; she had made herself intolerably disagreeable to Harriet Shelley, having failed perhaps to “manage and economize her temper,” as Godwin had long since recommended to her. Bysshe, with characteristic frankness, had explained to her husband how matters stood. On a day early in June Mrs. Godwin called on Shelley, and from that date friendly intercourse was renewed, although we do not now read of invitations accepted by Harriet to dinners at Skinner Street, or of dinners at the hotel graced by the presence of Mrs. Godwin.†

To pay his travelling expenses to London, Shelley had raised a small sum before leaving Ireland. His purse was slenderly provided; and some debts had been incurred at Tremadoc. From his cousins, the Groves, he seems to have heard that his mother and sisters were anxious to welcome him and Harriet to Field Place, and, on his cousins’ earnest entreaty, he resolved to address a letter of conciliation to his father. The hotel was a convenient place for conducting a friendly negotiation; the Duke of Norfolk had lately called, and expressed an interest in his affairs. Shelley’s twenty-first birthday was drawing near, and possibly Mr. Shelley might perceive that it was his interest to come to terms with a son who might soon have it in his power to encumber the property with *post-obit* bonds. “My dear father,” he wrote from Albemarle Street on May 4, “I once more presume to

\* I have to thank Madame Gatayes for the above, and other interesting reminiscences of Shelley.

† There is no entry respecting Shelley in Godwin’s diary from March 30, “Write to Shelley,” to June 8, “Call on Shelley and J. F. Newton for Shelley; tea, Shelley’s.” Perhaps it was on this occasion that Shelley acknowledged Harriet’s dislike to Mrs. Godwin, for we read in the diary for June 9, “M. J. [Mrs. Godwin] calls on Shelley.”

address you to state to you my sincere desire of being considered as worthy of a restoration to the intercourse with yourself and my family which I have forfeited by my follies. Some time since I stated my feelings on this subject in a letter to the Duke of Norfolk. I was agreeably surprised by a visit from him the other day, and much regretted that illness prevented me from keeping my appointment with him on the succeeding morning. If, however, I could convince you of the change that has taken place in some of the most unfavourable traits of my character, and of my willingness to make any concessions that may be judged best for the interest of my family, I flatter myself that there would be little further need of his Grace's interference. I hope the time is approaching when we shall consider each other as father and son with more confidence than ever, and that I shall no longer be a cause of disunion to the happiness of my family. I was happy to hear from John Grove, who dined with us yesterday, that you continue in good health. My wife unites with me in respectful regards." Shelley was conscious that he had been in some ways wanting in consideration for his father's feelings; that he had been a trying, intractable son, or one who must have seemed such to a man of his father's limited intelligence and high self-importance; he would willingly now place matters on a better footing, if that were possible. But Mr. Timothy Shelley, with characteristic wrongheadedness, must choose a test of Bysshe's filial obedience to which it was impossible for him to submit. Shelley could not disavow his convictions; he could not declare to the authorities of University College that he was now a sincere and dutiful son of the Church. "What regards your avowed opinions," wrote his father, "are in my judgment the most material parts of character requiring amendment. And as you now avow there is no change effected in them, I must decline all further communication or any personal interview until that shall be effected; and I desire you will

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consider this as my final answer to anything you may have to offer." Were it otherwise, Mr. Shelley went on to say in his blundering fashion, he could—even so—have received no communication from his son except through the Duke of Norfolk, "as I know his exalted mind will protect me at the moment and with the world." Not without reason might Bysshe write to the duke (May 28, 1813), with a sense that now at least the right was not wholly on the side of the elder man, "I was prepared to make to my father every reasonable concession, but I am not so degraded and miserable a slave as publicly to disavow an opinion which I believe to be true. Every man of common sense must plainly see that a sudden renunciation of sentiments seriously taken up is as unfortunate a test of intellectual uprightness as can possibly be devised. I take the liberty of enclosing my father's letter for your Grace's inspection. I repeat what I have said from the commencement of this negotiation, in which private communications from my father first induced me to engage, that I am willing to concede anything that is reasonable, anything that does not involve a compromise of that self-esteem without which life would be a burthen and disgrace." \*

Letters of Shelley, from May 4 to July 6, are dated from Cooke's Hotel; we know that by July 27 he was in occupation of a country house at Bracknell, in Berkshire. It is not easy to bring into agreement with these facts the statement of Hogg, that after a few days had been spent at the Albemarle Street Hotel, Harriet "took lodgings in Half-Moon Street, accounting the situation fashionable," where, he declares, Shelley and his wife stayed for several months.†

\* Cooke's Hotel, Friday morning [May 28]. Mr. Shelley's letter is dated "Miller's Hotel, May 26." Both letters have been printed in *Notes and Queries*, 2nd ser., vol. vi.

† "Life of Shelley," vol. ii. p. 389, where Hogg quotes from a statement written by himself in May, 1841. Elsewhere (p. 270) he says that Shelley on returning from Ireland resided for some weeks at hotels. I believe he must have

The statement is precise. "There was a little projecting window," writes Hogg, "in Half-Moon Street, in which Shelley might be seen from the street all day long, book in hand, with lively gestures and bright eyes; so that Mrs. N[ewton] said he wanted only a pan of clear water and a fresh turf to look like some young lady's lark, hanging outside for air and song." We are forced to suppose either that Shelley's residence in Half-Moon Street was for a brief period in April, or a still briefer period in some later month, or else that he dated his letters from the hotel, though not actually living in it, the Half-Moon Street lodgings, at no great distance from Dover and Albemarle Streets, being possibly in connection with the hotel, and reserved for guests who arranged to stay for a longer time than does the passing traveller or flying visitor from the country. Harriet, in whom Fanny Godwin had discovered "a fine lady," now aspired, according to Hogg, to be fashionable. While expecting the birth of a babe, she could not trudge the London streets, and Bysshe, who doubtless looked forward, though erroneously, to his approaching birthday as likely to bring him relief from money vexations, ventured—he to whom the confinement of carriage-driving was odious—to set up a carriage for his wife. The bill for the carriage, we are told, remained unpaid for a longer time than suited the coachmaker, and Hogg, in the spring or early summer, narrowly escaped arrest for the debt at the hands of bailiffs not skilled in trying the spirits, and blundering on that mundane mortal in their quest for the tricky Ariel.

In the Half-Moon Street lodgings, Bysshe, says Hogg, was happy and comfortable—"comfortable according to his own peculiar scheme of life." He found society in London—the society of friends more to his liking than the "saints and aristocrats" of Wales—and he found books. The little sitting-

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resided at Cooke's Hotel at least until towards the close of May. Again (p. 310) Hogg speaks of Shelley's residence at Half-Moon Street as of "some weeks or months." The number of the house in Half-Moon Street was 34.



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room on the first floor, with its projecting window, soon grew into a miniature library; books were "arranged in rows on the floor, in the recesses on each side of the fireplace; and they were piled in disorder on tables and chairs, and heaped up under tables in confusion. . . . In one recess remained, but little disturbed by any of us, in a long row, a Latin edition or translation of the works of Emmanuel Kant. It was comprised in I know not how many volumes; they were in boards, and were uncut and unopened. Of these the young metaphysician had been most anxious to obtain possession, but he totally neglected them obtained."\* Here, when Hogg would call, Harriet was to be found "bright, blooming, calm, and composed as heretofore;" and here she would read aloud, in her clear, equable voice, from Scott's last poem, "Rokeby," which had appeared in January. "Bysshe was sometimes able to give his attention for a little while to the reading, which flowed on easily in a continuous, unbroken stream; . . . he then suddenly started off, and returned, and heard a little more"—an unsatisfactory auditor to a reader who would fain have strict fealty shown to the new quarto volume. In long wanderings through the streets or parks, Hogg was Shelley's companion now, as he had been in the spring two years since. "I always let him lead the way, and followed his guidance," writes Hogg. "His course and choice of direction were erratic and uncommon, and he would dart across the road and quickly enter some unpromising, ill-omened street or passage, and hurry me along it. I have often wondered by what impulse he was thus borne along. His flight was to escape from, not to pursue; to get away from some object for which he had conceived a sudden dislike."

To dine with Shelley taxed a friend's devotion even more than to walk with him. Soon after his return from Ireland, when his intimacy with the Newtons was renewed, Harriet and he resumed strictly vegetarian habits; but to an uncon-

\* Hogg, "Life of Shelley," vol. ii. p. 311.

verted guest like Hogg meat-offerings of flesh were presented.\* If it were proposed to Shelley that he should order dinner, he stood aghast, says Hogg, in speechless trance; when recovered from the outrage to his feelings, "Ask Harriet," he would cry, with a desponding, supplicating mien. "The good Harriet herself was no proficient in culinary art; she had never been initiated in the mysteries of housewifery. 'Whatever you please,' was her ordinary answer." "Whatever you please" did not produce a dainty *menu*. A leg of coarse mutton boiled to rags, with no sauce and half-raw turnips; or some impregnable beef-steaks, with potatoes worthy of the beef-steaks and mutton, followed by uneatable cheese—the memory of these lived painfully with Hogg during half a century. "I have dropped a word, a hint about a pudding; a pudding, Bysshe said dogmatically, is a prejudice." To regular meals Bysshe, who did not submit to the bondage of times and seasons, was supremely indifferent. He ate only when hungry, said Trelawny of Shelley in the last year of his life, "and then like the birds, if he saw something edible lying about. . . . His drink was water, or tea if he could get it; bread was literally his staff of life; other things he thought superfluous." So was it with Shelley in London in 1813. "When he felt hungry," Hogg writes, "he would dash into the first baker's shop, buy a loaf, and rush out again, bearing it under his arm; and he strode onwards in his rapid course, breaking off pieces of bread and greedily swallowing them." Around the seat at which he read or wrote a circle of crumbs and fragments would lie scattered on the floor. He made his meal of bread luxurious by the addition of common pudding raisins, purchased at some mean shop, where customers being few he

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\* Hogg afterwards for a time renounced flesh-meat. From his "Life of Shelley," vol. ii. p. 322, we should suppose that Shelley at this time was not a professed vegetarian; his statement, however, on p. 414, is the correct one. We learn from a note to "A Vindication of Natural Diet" that Shelley and his wife "have lived on vegetables for eight months." This pamphlet was published after "Queen Mab," in 1813. From another source I know that in May or April, 1813, Harriet and Shelley were both strict vegetarians.

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might be speedily served, and these he carried loose in his waistcoat-pocket. At later and earlier times he loved pistol-shooting at a mark. Now his ball-practice, made with little pellets of bread, was directed against his unoffending and unsuspecting fellow-creatures. "In a sly, mysterious manner," says Hogg, he would shoot his tiny missiles, projecting them with his thumb, and "hitting the persons, whom he met in his walks, on the face, commonly on the nose," with admirable suddenness and precision. Panada—bread steeped in boiling water, then squeezed and sprinkled with sugar and nutmeg—he devoured with a prodigious relish. "Why, Bysshe," said Hogg to him one day, "you lap it up as greedily as the Val-kyriæ in Scandinavian story lap up the blood of the slain!" "Ay!" he shouted out, with grim delight, "I lap up the blood of the slain. I am going to sup up the gore of murdered kings."\* At times, when Harriet's "Whatever you please" had proved signally unsuccessful in producing a dinner, the only resource against absolute starvation was tea. "'We will have some muffins and crumpets for tea,' the famished Harriet would say. 'They will butter them!' Bysshe exclaimed, in a voice thrilling with horror;" but if the obscene thing were silently placed before him, muffins and crumpets and butter were despatched without remorse. Often, however, the butter being of the fatallest quality, comfort was sought in a supply of penny buns. "Shelley was fond of penny buns, but he never bought them unless he was put up to it. 'Get a shilling's worth of penny buns, Bysshe,' Harriet said, 'at some good confectioner's,' the situation of whose shop she described. He rushed out with incredible alacrity, like a wind god, and in an instant returned, and was heard stumbling and tumbling upstairs, with the bag of buns, open at the top, in his hand. . . . We had our own tea; it usually lay spread out on an open paper upon a side table; others might help themselves, and

\* Hogg, "Life of Shelley," vol. ii. pp. 321, 322.

probably they did so, but there was always some left for us." \* CHAP.  
Tea remained Shelley's favourite luxury to the close of his VIII.  
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"The liquor doctors rail at, and which I  
Will quaff in spite of them; and when we die  
We'll toss up who died first of drinking tea,  
And cry out, 'Heads or tails?' where'er we be." †

"Spirituuous liquors he never tasted; beer rarely. He never called for, purchased, or drew wine for his own drinking; but if it came in his way, and the company was not disagreeable to him, he would sit at table a while after dinner, and take two or three glasses of any white wine, uniformly selecting the weakest." ‡ His occasional indulgence when at Oxford in a tumbler or two of negus he now looked back upon with a sense of the unworthiness of such gross sensuality. "I ought," he exclaimed, "to have been shot for it!" At Newton's delightful vegetable dinners even water, if presented, must first have been freed by distillation from its taint of lead; the innocent dainties were such as might have gratified our Mother Eve's angelic guest—all autumn piled upon the table, with dulcet creams and nectarous draughts,

"And lucent syrups, tinct with cinnamon;  
Manna and dates in argosy transferred  
From Fez."

"We luxuriated, ran riot," says Hogg, "in tea and coffee, and sought variety occasionally in cocoa and chocolate. Bread and butter and buttered toast were eschewed; but bread-cakes, plain seed-cakes, were liberally divided amongst the faithful." Honey, and especially honeycomb, were dear to the poet's lips; he did not think scorn of radishes; and one addition to the vegetable dietary seems to have been all his own—in

\* Hogg, "Life of Shelley," vol. ii. pp. 323, 324.

† Letter to Maria Gisborne.

‡ Hogg, "Life of Shelley," vol. ii. p. 415.

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country rambles he would pick the gummy drops from fir-tree trunks and eat them with a relish, or "in walking through a pine wood, he would apply his tongue to a larch, and lick it as it oozed in a liquid state from the bark." A great idealist, of a century before Shelley, had found nourishment for his climbing intellect in draughts of tar-water.

As to costume, for a time Shelley was careful to avoid the use of any material formed from the wool or hide of beasts, and his long black coat was made of jean.\* "Damn braces, bless relaxes!" was an exclamation of the visionary Blake, having a moral as well as a material significance; it might have been as aptly uttered by the lips of Shelley. "I never remember," Hogg writes, "to have seen Bysshe in a great coat or cloak, even in the coldest weather. He wore his waistcoat much or entirely open; sometimes there was an ellipsis of his waistcoat; it was not expressed but understood. Unless he was compelled to cover it by main force, he had his throat bare; the neckcloth being cast aside, lost, over the hills and far away, and the collar of his shirt unbuttoned. In the street or road he reluctantly wore a hat, but in fields or gardens his little round head had no other covering than his long, wild, ragged locks." These wild locks upstared more wildly when Shelley, having dipped his head, with much splashing like a bird, in a basinful of cold water, a ceremony repeated several times each day, would thrust his fingers through the dripping, brown hair, setting it on end. A vegetarian diet and abundance of cold water were less likely to affect Shelley's health injuriously than was the intellectual excitement which set in with him at hours when other mortals are struck and strewn by the leaden mace of slumber. Shelley's drowsy fit came on early, and when it had passed away, he was as a skylark saluting the new day, but at midnight. Sometimes Hogg would sit up with him all night, reading, conversing, drinking tea, playing at chess. A little

\* This I learn from Madame Gatayes.

later, when at Bracknell, Shelley confessed to his friend Cornelia Turner that he lingered late, conversing with her, because he dreaded the visions which pursued him when alone at night.\*

“He never was inclined,” says Hogg, who loves a fantastic exaggeration, “to go to bed; it may be truly affirmed that he never went to bed. He was sent to bed, taken to bed, put to bed, but he never retired to rest of his own accord and voluntarily. He was commonly most communicative, unreserved, and eloquent and enthusiastic, when those around him were inclining to yield to the influence of sleep, or rather at the hour when they would have been disposed to seek their chambers but for the bewitching charm of his discourse.” Although Shelley, by turning night into day, may have been preparing nervous disorders for himself, as yet his health was not seriously impaired. Already, indeed, he suffered from a pain in the side and chest, which afterwards caused him acute and sometimes prolonged anguish. He coughed, and had a nervous apprehension that he was consumptive. “He suffered occasionally from certain painful infirmities,” says Hogg; “but his stamina were sound, his constitution and general health good.” Towards the close of 1813 the strange delusion afflicted him that he was attacked by elephantiasis; he had travelled in a mail-coach with a fat old lady, whose legs, the reverse of slender, had horribly fascinated Shelley’s gaze and imagination. She must be a victim of that cruel disease which changes the human skin into an elephant’s hide; the disease must be contagious, and he himself could not now escape from its invasion. One day at Mr. Newton’s house in Chester Street, “as he was sitting in an armchair,” writes Madame Gatayes, “talking to my father and mother, he suddenly slipped down on the ground, twisting about like an eel. ‘What is the matter?’ cried my mother. In his impressive tone Shelley answered, ‘I have the elephantiasis.’”

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\* This I learn from Mr. Alfred Turner (son of Mrs. Turner, the friend of Shelley) through a letter of his cousin, Madame Gatayes.

CHAP. VIII. He was continually on the watch for its symptoms, declares Peacock. "He would draw the skin of his own hands, arms, and neck very tight, and if he discovered any deviation from smoothness, he would seize the person next to him, and endeavour by a corresponding pressure to see if any corresponding deviation existed. He often startled young ladies in an evening party by this singular process, which was as instantaneous as a flash of lightning. His friends took various methods of dispelling the delusion. I quoted to him the words of Lucretius—

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'Est elephas morbus, qui propter flumina Nili  
Gignitur Ægypto in media, neque præterea usquam.'

He said these verses were the greatest comfort he had."\* According to Hogg a physician was consulted, and after some weeks the grotesque fancy was forgotten as suddenly as it had sprung into being.

All this was a very serious matter to Shelley; yet he himself was not without a swift sense of the ridiculous, and a freakish delight in absurdity of incident, although his habitual earnestness and gentle seriousness of disposition gave few chances to his erratic humour or his feeling for the comic side of life. An ill-timed jest offended him; he constantly and vehemently expressed his abhorrence of laughter and ridicule; he talked often of "the withering and perverting spirit of comedy," and on one occasion, when induced by Peacock to be present at a representation of Sheridan's "School for Scandal," he could with difficulty sit out the play. It offended his moral sense. "I see the purpose of this comedy," he said, when Charles Surface in his jollity had retired, and Joseph appeared in his library; "it is to associate virtue with bottles and glasses, and villany with books." He hated to have the vital sequence of thought and feeling checked or broken in conversation by the barren surprises of a punster. Yet his friends—

\* Peacock's Works, vol. iii. p. 407.

Hogg, Hunt, Peacock, Trelawny—were not men of vinegar aspect or solemn Sir Oracles. He could at times be mirthful; could indulge some impulse of elvish *espièglerie*; and on rare occasions could tell some droll story, half acting it as he went along, and “shrieking,” says Hogg, “with paroxysms of the wildest laughter.” These unexpected, vehement, and irrepressible bursts of laughter, rising, as Hogg describes it, to a fiendish peal, would sometimes seize their victim, were occasion given, at inopportune and perilous moments when a formal gravity was more becoming; but Shelley’s spasm of merriment, tickled to its ebullition by some sudden sense of incongruity, must run its course in spite of let or hindrance.

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The early summer of 1813 had been bleak and churlish; flowers opened timidly and late, and fruits were harsh and crude. But before June was over a new brightness had entered the year for Shelley and Harriet—a little, fair, blue-eyed babe was born. By the twenty-eighth of the month the young mother was rapidly recovering. They named the blue-eyed girl Ianthe—“violet-blossom”—a comer to redeem the broken promises of spring; the name, known to readers of Ovid, was also that given by Shelley to the first daughter of his imagination, the violet eyed lady of “Queen Mab.” They added the name Elizabeth. It doubtless pleased Harriet that the child should be called after her sister, and Shelley’s favourite sister was an Elizabeth. “This accession to his family,” says Hogg, “did not appear to afford Shelley any gratification or to create an interest. He never spoke of his child to me.” And Harriet, Hogg goes on to say, was unwilling to let him see the little one, because the child suffered from some trivial blemish in one of her eyes; and the mother, herself a beauty, could not bear that it should be known that one so nearly connected with her was not perfectly beautiful. From which we learn that Shelley and Harriet did not turn to Hogg—“a pearl within an oyster-shell” \*

\* So Shelley describes Hogg in the letter to Maria Gisborne.



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—for sympathy in their new joy. We know that Harriet delighted in the babe's azure eyes, and that Shelley had a father's happiness in fondling and cherishing his fragile blossom of humanity. "He was extremely fond of his child," writes Peacock, "and would walk up and down a room with it in his arms for a long time together, singing to it a monotonous melody of his own making, which ran on the repetition of a word of his own making. His song was 'Yáhmāni, Yáhmāni, Yáhmāni, Yáhmāni.'\*" It did not please me, but, what was more important, it pleased the child, and lulled it when it was fretful. Shelley was extremely fond of his children. He was pre-eminently an affectionate father." When Ianthe was three months old Shelley told his love for her and for her mother—two feelings now blended into one—in words of a dialect more familiar than that of his "Yáhmāni" song, which last was intelligible only to that new-comer from the ante-natal world to whom it was crooningly addressed.

## TO IANTHE: SEPTEMBER, 1813.

I love thee, Baby! for thine own sweet sake:  
 Those azure eyes, that faintly dimpled cheek,  
 Thy tender frame so eloquently weak,  
 Love in the sternest heart of hate might wake;  
 But more when o'er thy fitful slumber bending  
 Thy mother folds thee to her wakeful heart,  
 Whilst love and pity in her glances blending,  
 All that thy passive eyes can feel impart:  
 More, when some feeble lineaments of her  
 Who bore thy weight beneath her spotless bosom,  
 As with deep love I read thy face, recur;  
 More dear art thou, O fair and fragile blossom;  
 Dearest when most thy tender traits express  
 The image of thy mother's loveliness.†

\* Peacock adds a note: "The tune was the uniform repetition of three notes, not very true in their intervals. The nearest resemblance will be found in the second, third, and fourth of a minor key: B, C, D, for example, in the key of A natural; a crotchet and two quavers."

† This sonnet is now printed for the first time from Shelley's manuscript by

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It was Hogg's impression that Ianthe was born at a small house in some quiet back street in Pimlico, where he called several times to inquire for the mother and daughter. There, he says, they remained not above a month. It is certain that by July 27 Shelley and his wife had moved to Bracknell, in Berkshire. The motive for the change of residence, according to Hogg, was that they might be nearer to some new and charming acquaintances, the Boinvilles, whom they had probably first met at the house of Mr. and Mrs. Newton. In this acquaintance the attraction was mutual, for Shelley was formed to be an ever-fresh delight to those with whom he found himself in sympathy. Entirely without arrogance or aggressive egotism; attached to ideas, yet submitting his most cherished convictions to the freest discussion; of gracious and gentle manners, yet never wearing the stiff brocade of ceremony; responding like a tremulous instrument to every breath of passion or of sentiment,—he must needs be peculiarly interesting to women of intelligence and feeling, whose sense of beauty in human character was not determined by conventional rule and line. Not but that he occasionally tried the good humour of his friends by erratic and unaccountable ways. "He took strange caprices," writes Hogg, "unfounded frights and dislikes, vain apprehensions and panic terrors, and therefore he absented himself from formal and sacred engagements. He was unconscious and oblivious of times, places, persons, and seasons; and, falling into some poetic vision, some daydream, he quickly and completely forgot all that he had repeatedly and solemnly promised; or he ran away after some object of imaginary urgency and importance which suddenly came into his head, setting off in vain pursuit of it, he knew not whither. When he was caught, brought up in custody, and turned over to the ladies, with, 'Behold your king!' to be caressed, courted, admired, and flattered, the

permission of Mr. Esdaile. It is headed "To Ianthe Oct. Septbr. 1813" (the *Oct.* having a penstroke drawn through it).

CHAP. king of beauty and fancy would too commonly bolt; slip  
 VIII. away, steal out, creep off; unobserved and almost magically  
 Apr.-Dec. he vanished; thus mysteriously depriving his fair subjects  
 1813. of his much-coveted, long-looked-for company." It is believed  
 in some countries that the goat passes one hour of the twenty-  
 four every day in the infernal regions. You watch him, and  
 suddenly he has disappeared. Shelley, says Hogg, "used to  
 vanish in as abrupt and inexplicable a manner as a goat. . . .  
 I have sometimes seen him standing a long while watching  
 a goat patiently, and following after it, for I had related the  
 superstitious legend to him, and it captivated his fancy and  
 pleased him prodigiously, and he would eye a goat that came  
 unexpectedly towards him eagerly, and inquire with pene-  
 trating glances, 'What news from Hades?'" When, therefore,  
 the wild creature was caught, and rendered tame and sub-  
 missive for a season, great were the captor's pride and pleasure.  
 We read of an evening in July, 1813, when Shelley, by a  
 triumph of female diplomacy and guile, was inveigled into  
 accompanying the Newtons to Vauxhall, whither as one of the  
 party an innocent young Quakeress had also been beguiled.  
 Shelley, declares Hogg, saw the snare, but submitted to his  
 fate, "and like a great and good man as he was, he determined  
 patiently and cheerfully to fulfil his destinies." Nor were the  
 destinies altogether cruel; for though Shelley felt no incli-  
 nation to float away into the dance, and certainly had no  
 delight in the fumes of arrack punch, he was happy in the  
 society of the lady who had so cleverly effected his capture,  
 and he had a child's pleasure in the rows of twinkling lamps  
 under dusky elms, and in the flash and flame of the sputtering  
 fireworks.

"So you know the Boinvilles," Shelley wrote from Rome  
 to Peacock, in the year 1819. "I could not help considering  
 Mrs. Boinville, when I knew her, as the most admirable speci-  
 men of a human being I had ever seen. Nothing earthly  
 ever appeared to me more perfect than her character and

manners. It is improbable that I shall ever meet again the person whom I so much esteemed, and still admire. I wish, however, that when you see her you would tell her that I have not forgotten her nor any of the amiable circle once assembled round her; and that I desired such remembrances as an exile and a *Pariah* may be permitted to address to an acknowledged member of the community of mankind. . . . Cornelia, though so young when I saw her, gave indications of her mother's excellences; and certainly less fascinating, is, I doubt not, equally amiable and more sincere. It was hardly possible for a person of the extreme subtlety and delicacy of Mrs. Boinville's understanding and affections to be quite sincere and constant."\*

At some date, not far from the close of his life, Shelley wrote to Mrs. Boinville, then residing at Sidmouth with her daughter, Cornelia Turner, expressing his wish to return and come within sight of the smoke of her cottage chimney. Mrs. Boinville, who had been pained by the opinions put forth in some of Shelley's published writings, declined to receive him as a visitor at that time, and afterwards deeply regretted the decision by which she had thrown away this last opportunity of seeing a friend to whom she had been so dear, and who remembered so gratefully her former affection. In 1813 Shelley's acquaintance with the Boinville household had all the charm of radiant newness; it was the entrance into a world more amiable and exquisite than he had yet known. Mrs. Newton and her sister Mrs. Boinville (or Madame de Boinville, if the French form of the name should be preferred) were the daughters of Mr. Collins, a wealthy proprietor of plantations and negroes in Saint Vincent, who resided in England. He had travelled on the Continent, was a good French scholar, and had imbibed the new sentiments and ideas of his time which gathered around the enchanted word "liberty." In his house

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\* Forman's edition of Shelley's Prose Works, iv. p. 100. The A. and his wife referred to in the letter (if not Mr. and Mrs. Turner) probably were Mrs. Boinville's son Alfred and his wife. He married, in 1818, Harriet, daughter of the vegetarian Dr. Lambe.

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came and went many of the constitutional emigrants from France, who had helped to lead the Revolution through its earlier stages, and had been driven abroad by the proscriptions and bloodshed of its later days. The eldest daughter of the family, a beautiful creature, eager for ideas and full of generous enthusiasm, had caught the political fervour of the day. She could not content herself with her father's constitutional principles. "Round her slight figure," writes her grandson, a Presbyterian minister, "she wore the badge of republicanism—a wide red band—and I have often heard her call herself *une enfant de la Révolution*. With this she had also unfortunately accepted the principles of the false philosophy of the age; but her general conduct, unbounded generosity, devotedness of character, and unfeigned modesty of nature, might well have put many professing Christians to the blush, for in the refinement and elevation of her sentiments she surpassed almost any woman I have ever known." To Mr. Collins's house, while the French Revolution was still pursuing its bloody way, was introduced a distinguished foreigner, tall and handsome, some thirty-seven years of age, who had played no insignificant part in the affairs of France. M. de Boinville, born at Metz in 1756, had been a *fermier-général* under the old *régime*. He had married early, and after the birth of one child had lost his wife by consumption. In the brilliant society of pre-Revolution days he was distinguished by Lafayette's special confidence and esteem, and naturally attached himself to the liberal-constitutional party in politics. It was his happiness to enjoy the friendship of the young poet André Chenier, too foully done to death. On the night of October 5, 1789, when the Paris mob invaded the palace at Versailles, it was M. de Boinville who first was wakened by the confused and gathering rumours in the air; when the king and queen returned to the capital, escorted by the National Guard, on one side of the carriage of Marie Antoinette rode Lafayette, and M. de Boinville on the

other. While in England, engaged on a political mission to Philippe Égalité, his name was entered by the revolutionary government on the list of *émigrés*, and his property was confiscated. He dared not at this time return to France; and it was now, while penniless in London, that he made the acquaintance of Mr. Collins and his household. His distressed condition doubtless would make him all the more an object of interest to an enthusiastic girl; and when he avowed his love, Miss Collins resolved that her father's objection to a bridegroom who could not support a wife should be no bar between them. She had two hundred a year of her own, and it should be his. One day, while Mr. Collins was absent, the lovers fled northwards; they were married by the blacksmith of Gretna Green, and a second time according to the rites of the Church of England. Mr. Collins's resentment did not last long, and their first child, named Cornelia, was born in his house in 1795. Under the Consulate M. de Boinville returned to France, and his wife following him, and by special permission entering Paris, had the pleasure of being introduced to Lafayette, for whose freedom, when he was an Austrian prisoner, she and her husband had eagerly exerted themselves. "Several times during the war before and after the peace of Amiens," her grandson writes, "she crossed the sea with her children or with money—no easy matter in those troublous times; but her courage was great. On one occasion she was well-nigh shipwrecked with her little ones; on another she was taken prisoner at the Hague, but the jailer was so fascinated by her beauty and moved by her sorrows, that he contrived to allow her to make her escape." A journey to Portugal in search of health, undertaken for Cornelia's sake, was followed, in 1812, by a visit to Paris, when Madame de Boinville saw her husband for the last time. When Napoleon entered on the disastrous Russian campaign, M. de Boinville accepted a valuable appointment in the Commissariat department of the Grand Army. Mortally stricken, like so many others, by the frost during the

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retreat from Moscow, he died, calling on his daughter Cornelia, in the hospital at Wilna, on February 7, 1813. It was not long before this date that Mr. Collins had died. Thus in the same year in which Shelley made the acquaintance of the Boinville family, a cloud of sorrow had overshadowed them. Though her face retained a certain youthful beauty, already the hair was white as snow on Madame de Boinville's forehead. Shelley remembered the mysterious spinner, Maimuna, in his favourite poem of "Thalaba," who sang by the pinewood fire, in sweet low tones, an unintelligible song:—

"The pine-boughs were cheerfully blazing,  
And her face was bright with the flame;  
Her face was as a damsel's face,  
And yet her hair was gray."

This, then, was Maimuna, and Shelley was indeed caught in an almost invisible thread spun around him, but unconsciously, by this subtle and benignant enchantress.\*

The weaker side of the Boinville enthusiasms and sentiment was that which chiefly caught Hogg's amused glances. Mrs. Boinville was "too much of the French school" to be quite agreeable to one who did not choose ever to desert the substantial realities of the world for the sake of airy principles or fine feelings. "The greater part of her associates," says Hogg, "were odious. I generally found there two or three sentimental young butchers, an eminently philosophical tinker, and several very unsophisticated medical practitioners or medical students, all of low origin and vulgar and offensive manners. They sighed, turned up their eyes, retailed philosophy, such as it was, and swore by William Godwin and 'Political Justice,' acting, moreover, and very clumsily, the parts

\* The information given above with respect to M. and Mme. de Boinville is derived from the record of their grandson, Charles de Boinville, given in chap. i. of Mr. Thomas Constable's "Memoir of the Rev. C. A. Chastel de Boinville." Through the kindness of Mr. Constable I have had an opportunity of inquiring of members of the Boinville and Turner families for letters of Shelley, but none are known to be in existence.

of Petrarchs, Werthers, St. Leons, and Fleetwoods. . . . I bore with the rabble rout for a little while, on account of my friend, and because I could there enjoy his precious society; and they had made him believe that their higgledy-piggledy ways were very right and fine, and conducive to progress and perfectibility. . . . The last pilgrimage I made to the abode of perfect republican equality, I met Bysshe near the door, towards which he was advancing with mighty strides and his wonted rapidity. I seized his arm and said, 'Come along; let us take a walk together; let us leave the sentimentalists to ripen for the gallows by themselves.' At which sally Bysshe laughed so loud and so long, says his friend, who never liked to tell a story by halves, that the good people of the quiet street in Pimlico threw up their windows in order to discover the cause of the disturbance. "'How I wish I could be as fastidious and exclusive as you are!'" Bysshe sighed forth as we walked; 'but I cannot.'

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The intimacy between the Boinville and Shelley households did not lessen when both migrated to the quiet little village of Bracknell, where Shelley found himself at no great distance from scenes with which he had been familiar as an Eton schoolboy. The small house which he obtained as a temporary residence bore a name—"High Elms"—promising greenery and cool refreshment after the July streets. Hither, as a visitor to the Shelleys came Mrs. Newton, pleased to be near her sister, and Mr. Newton to taste the Berkshire roots and fruits, sip distilled water, and brood on the mysterious significances of the signs of the Zodiac. Hogg had now gone northwards for his vacation; but Peacock was just returned from Wales, and when Shelley begged that he would visit Bracknell, he was not slow to accept the invitation. To Peacock, with his keen, ironic good sense, High Elms seemed like his own Crotchet Castle seen in a pure, anticipated cognition. "At Bracknell," he says, "Shelley was surrounded by a numerous society, all in a great measure of his own opinions



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in relation to religion and politics, and the larger portion of them in relation to vegetable diet. But they wore their rue with a difference. Every one of them adopting some of the articles of the faith of their general Church, had each nevertheless some predominant crotchet of his or her own, which left a number of open questions for earnest and not always temperate discussion. I was sometimes irreverent enough to laugh at the fervour with which opinions utterly uncondusive to any practical result were battled for as matters of the highest importance to the well-being of mankind. Harriet Shelley was always ready to laugh with me, and we thereby both lost caste with some of the more hot-headed of the party."

To bear the smile of a friend at one's cherished ideas and chosen associates is not hard; a friend's individuality is all his own, and we accept his good qualities with their accompanying defects. But to discover that a wife has a distinct personality, and can laugh at our follies or our enthusiasms, comes at first to the unreflecting as a surprise, and perhaps not as an altogether agreeable one. Harriet, if we may conjecture, was finding her true self, and was being freed from that vague and luminous mist into which she had for a time been caught as Shelley's girlish disciple, zealous if without knowledge. The Zodiacal signs may mean something profound, as Mr. Newton supposed; but, after all, a row of bonnets in a shop-window are nearer to us, and in some respects dearer. There is, for those who can discover it, more charm in the definite commonplaceness of a little realist than in her spurious attempts at idealism; but it needs a well-balanced heart to discover this kind of charm. We may suppose that Harriet's laughs with Peacock were not recognized by Shelley as a sign that they were growing closer each to the other in sympathy. A more positive source of annoyance was that Harriet had delegated the nursing of her child to a hireling, and that Eliza Westbrook, whom Shelley now vehemently disliked, was for

ever advising, directing, superintending, hovering as guardian angel over the cradle. "I have often thought," wrote Peacock, "that if Harriet had nursed her own child, and if this sister had not lived with them, the links of their married love would not have been so readily broken." The sonnet to Ianthe, written in September, 1813, has told us how the babe was dear not only for its own sake but for the mother's, and how the mother had grown dearer for the babe's. A few days after the arrival of the Shelleys at Bracknell, Harriet completed her eighteenth year. Twelve months ago, at Lynmouth, Shelley had celebrated the anniversary in a sonnet bright in its confidence of ever-enduring love. Now, as the sun sank towards the far horizon, on the last evening of July, he thought wistfully, fondly, yet almost fearfully of his happiness with Harriet, whose birthday was on the morrow, and he expressed his feeling in a sonnet. In spite of its words of cheer, there is something in it of the strangeness and sadness of sunset; in the tone of its closing lines one detects already the little rift within the lover's lute, which had seemed to be healed, or never to have gaped at all, when the later and happier sonnet to Ianthe was written.

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EVENING. TO HARRIET.\*

O thou bright Sun! beneath the dark blue line  
Of western distance that sublime descendest,  
And gleaming lovelier as thy beams decline,  
Thy million hues to every vapour lendest,  
And over cobweb lawn and grove and stream  
Sheddest the liquid magic of thy light,  
Till calm Earth, with the parting splendour bright,  
Shows like the vision of a beauteous dream;  
What gazer now with astronomic eye  
Could coldly count the spots within thy sphere?

\* Printed by Mr. Esdaile's permission from the copy in Shelley's handwriting in his manuscript book. It is headed "Sep. 1813"—the date, I suppose, of Shelley's copying the poem into the book, which probably had been given to Harriet. At the close is the date of composition—"July 31st, 1813."

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Such were thy lover, Harriet, could he fly  
 The thoughts of all that makes his passion dear,  
 And turning senseless from thy warm caress  
 Pick flaws in our close-woven happiness.

As yet, however, if there was a speck upon Shelley's happiness, it was no more than a speck; nor had Harriet cause for discontent. "Very blooming and very happy," she seemed to Mrs. Newton during the visit of the Newtons to High Elms. "Ianthé," adds that lady in a letter to Hogg, "was grown surprisingly; and Miss Westbrook ever smiling and serene."

The hurry of life in London and Ianthe's birth had probably brought to an end the lessons in Latin given by her husband to Harriet. From a teacher Shelley now became a pupil. Mrs. Boinville and her young married daughter, Cornelia Turner, were not qualified to expound Kant's "Kritik" or Spinoza's "Ethics" to their young friend, but they could incite him to enter a new and exquisite province—that of Italian poetry; and if his feet tripped, they could lend a hand to help him over the difficulties of the way. These Italian studies, commenced in London, with Hogg for his fellow-student, were pursued further in the quiet of the country. Bysshe, says Hogg, "had always at his command a short and royal road to knowledge." He was impatient of the tardy methods of progression by dictionary and grammar, yet when he condescended to be so taught, "his inconceivable quickness, and miraculous powers and faculty of apprehension, enabled him to seize and master in minutes what his less highly gifted fellow-learners acquired in hours." While reading Tasso, the two friends advanced at an even pace, side by side; but when they came to their second author, Ariosto, Shelley could not restrain his ardour, and Hogg found himself left far behind. Ariosto had excited and fascinated Shelley; he eagerly devoured the "Orlando Furioso," returning to it again and again. "He spoke of the unparalleled poem with wild rapture during our walks," says Hogg, "and read aloud to

me detached passages with energy and enthusiastic delight." At a later time, when Shelley contemplated writing a tragedy, with Tasso's madness for its subject, and when he looked upon Tasso's manuscripts in the public library at Ferrara, his feeling towards the two great Italian poets had altered. The handwriting of Ariosto seemed to Shelley to express a strong and keen but circumscribed energy of mind; that of Tasso appeared "the symbol of an intense and earnest mind, exceeding at times its own depth, and admonished to return by the chillness of the waters of oblivion striking upon its adventurous feet." In 1813 Dante was left unattacked; but towards Petrarch the two students were drawn by the special interest taken in that poet by a fair acquaintance—perhaps Mrs. Boinville's daughter, Cornelia. She was, says the mocker, Hogg, a prey to a kind of sweet melancholy arising from causes purely imaginary; she required consolation, and found it in the poetry of Petrarch. "Bysshe entered at once fully into her views, and caught the soft infection, breathing the tenderest and sweetest melancholy as every true poet ought." There may have been, as Hogg intimates, a touch of sentimental unreality in this cult of Petrarch; but if Cornelia Turner was priestess in this worship, it is but just to add that Petrarch was honoured by a woman of noble and generous nature. "If to be Christ-like is to be a Christian," wrote a man of solid judgment, who knew her well in later years, "this noble woman was eminently one. . . . She lived for others, and found her highest happiness in promoting theirs. Love was the motive principle of her life. It was her daily work to cheer and comfort the sorrowful, to relieve the poor, and to help the bowed down to bear their cross with patience and in hope. Her smile was as sunlight, and radiated the love of which it was the expression directly into the hearts of those who looked on her."\* In choosing for friends such

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\* Thomas Constable, "Memoir of Rev. C. de Boinville," p. 365. Mrs. Turner died on October 25, 1874.

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women as Mrs. Newton, Mrs. Boinville, and Cornelia Turner, Shelley gave good proof of his insight and discrimination.

In June, when Mr. Timothy Shelley abruptly broke off negotiations with his son, tidings reached Shelley that his mother wished to see him. He had not been long settled at Bracknell when she begged him, during an absence of his father and the three youngest children, to visit his home once more. Shelley determined to walk across the country to Horsham, a distance of some thirty miles, arriving in the twilight of a long summer's day. When within a few miles of Field Place, a farmer gave him a seat in his cart, and amused his unknown companion with grievous information respecting Master Shelley, who seldom went to church. A young officer, Captain Kennedy, then quartered at Horsham, and receiving hospitality from the Shelley family, has left a record of this last, strange, clandestine visit of a son to his father's house:—

“At this time I had not seen Shelley, but the servants, especially the old butler, Laker, had spoken of him to me. He seemed to have won the hearts of the whole household. Mrs. Shelley often spoke to me of her son; her heart yearned after him with all the fondness of a mother's love. . . . He arrived at Field Place exceedingly fatigued. I came there the following morning to meet him. I found him with his mother and his two elder sisters in a small room off the drawing-room, which they had named Confusion Hall. He received me with frankness and kindness, as if he had known me from childhood, and at once won my heart. I fancy I see him now as he sat by the window, and hear his voice, the tones of which impressed me with his sincerity and simplicity. His resemblance to his sister Elizabeth was as striking as if they had been twins. His eyes were most expressive; his complexion beautifully fair, his features exquisitely fine; his hair was dark, and no peculiar attention to its arrangement was manifest. In person he was slender and gentlemanlike, but inclined to stoop; his gait was decidedly

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not military. The general appearance indicated great delicacy of constitution. One would at once pronounce of him that he was different from other men. There was an earnestness in his manner and such perfect gentleness of breeding and freedom from everything artificial as charmed every one. I never met a man who so immediately won upon me. The generosity of his disposition and utter unselfishness imposed upon him the necessity of strict self-denial in personal comforts. Consequently he was obliged to be most economical in his dress. He one day asked us how we liked his coat, the only one he had brought with him. We said it was very nice, it looked as if new. 'Well,' said he, 'it is an old black coat which I have had done up, and smartened with metal buttons and a velvet collar.'

"As it was not desirable that Bysshe's presence in the country should be known, we arranged that walking out he should wear my scarlet uniform, and that I should assume his outer garments. So he donned the soldier's dress and sallied forth. His head was so remarkably small that, though mine be not large, the cap came down over his eyes, the peak resting on his nose, and it had to be stuffed before it would fit him. His hat just stuck on the crown of my head. He certainly looked like anything but a soldier. The metamorphosis was very amusing; he enjoyed it much, and made himself perfectly at home in his unwonted garb. We gave him the name of Captain Jones, under which name we used to talk of him after his departure; but with all our care Bysshe's visit could not be kept a secret.

"I chanced to mention the name of Sir James Mackintosh, of whom he expressed the highest admiration. He told me Sir James was intimate with Godwin, to whom, he said, he owed everything; from whose book, 'Political Justice,' he had derived all that was valuable in knowledge and virtue. . . . He reasoned and spoke like a perfect gentleman, and treated my arguments, boy as I was (I had lately completed

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my sixteenth year), with as much consideration and respect as if I had been his equal in ability and attainments. Shelley was one of the most sensitive of human beings; he had a horror of taking life, and looked upon it as a crime. He read poetry with great emphasis and solemnity; one evening he read aloud to us a translation of one of Goethe's poems, and at this day I think I hear him. In music he seemed to delight as a medium of association; the tunes which had been favourites in boyhood charmed him. There was one, which he played several times on the piano with one hand, which seemed to absorb him; it was an exceedingly simple air, which I understand his earliest love (Harriet Grove) was wont to play for him. He soon left us, and I never saw him after, but I can never forget him. It was his last visit to Field Place. He was an amiable, gentle being." \*

While residing at Bracknell Shelley attained his majority. He was in sore straits for money, and there was an accumulation of debts which, to one whose income was large, would have seemed inconsiderable, but which pressed heavily on him, who still received from his father only two hundred pounds a year. Early in August he was in town, endeavouring to procure the means of subsistence, while Harriet and the babe, with Eliza Westbrook, remained at High Elms, with a slenderly provisioned purse. Negotiations were reopened with Mr. Timothy Shelley, and an amicable meeting took place between father and son. While lawyers were consulting and drawing up opinions on disputed points, Shelley ran some

\* With Captain Kennedy's description of Shelley at this date we may compare that of Madame Gatayes, in a letter to the writer of this biography: "Having seen much of Shelley, although only in my childhood, I cannot forget his most peculiar appearance. Slender, tall, his head bending forwards, he was by no means what one would call a fine, handsome man; but ethereal-looking and gentle as he really was; with small features, very uncommon eyes, his hair in disorder, as if combed by the god Boreas, which gave him rather a wild look. There was a mixture of penetrating expression and childish simplicity together in his countenance." "Captain Kennedy's description of Shelley and his character," wrote Henry Reveley, "is the best and most truthful I have ever seen."

risk of being arrested for debt; and it is stated that his father, without informing him, took means to avert this indignity. Shelley's mother privately acquainted him with all that went on, and Harriet received friendly letters from her husband's sisters. To live on hopes deferred, however, was impossible, and at length, in October, Shelley found himself compelled, chiefly with a view to paying his debts, to resort to the ruinous mode of raising money by post-obit bonds. A bond for two thousand pounds procured for his pressing needs precisely one-fourth of that sum.

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When Shelley took up his abode at High Elms it was his intention to remain at Bracknell, at least until the following spring. But by autumn his thoughts had begun to turn once more towards Wales, not to the scene of horror at Tanyralit, but to the foaming Elan, the Clearwen, where he had sailed his rude toy-boats, and that mountain vale in which Harriet and he had spent some happy days after his first visit to Ireland.\* If only Nantgwillt house were to be had! In such a delightful retreat they might indeed find rest for ever. Meanwhile it was arranged that he should have another interview with his father in November, and therefore, however it might be with Harriet, he could not himself remain long absent from London. October was now come, with its misty splendours and fading glory of the woods. Two years since, in the dull November days, they had arrived at Keswick, and had found it even then a region of delight. Why should they not forthwith hasten to the southern district of the English lakes, and make acquaintance with the beauty of Windermere? The carriage, which Shelley had rashly procured some months since, might now render them a useful service, for in so easy a conveyance Harriet and little Ianthe would suffer but slight fatigue. There would be room for Eliza Westbrook—the

\* In August, 1813, Harriet wrote to Mr. Williams, bidding him tell Mr. Nanney that he might sell the furniture at Tanyralit (which she hoped might fetch a great sum) for the benefit of a Mr. Girdlestone, of whom we know nothing.



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inevitable sister-in-law—for Shelley, with a light equipment of luggage, and yet a seat for one more traveller. For reasons of his own it suited Peacock to be absent from London at this time; he, then, should be the fourth in their carriage, and except to chosen friends their whereabouts should remain a secret. One companion of their recent wanderings was now happily at a distance. Dan Healey had carried his brogue and his blunders back to his native land. He had never been of much use to master or mistress, but his fidelity had attached them to him. Among the Berkshire peasants Dan felt an exile, and pined for Irish air, but Harriet had not wherewithal to pay the wages due to him. At length the faithful Dan, like other friends too quickly won, was discovered to be a traitor in disguise; he grew insolent and ungrateful, and arrived in Dublin to put in circulation there the pathetic story of his wrongs.

By October 6 the party of four, with little blue-eyed Ianthe for a fifth, were at Warwick on their way to the Lakes. A few days later they had taken rooms at Lowood Inn, and were looking for a house; but no house to suit them could be found. And if the people of Carnarvonshire were all aristocrats and saints, the good folk of Westmoreland were, if possible, more intolerant and intolerable. It was decided that the travellers should push on to Edinburgh, there perhaps to spend the winter. The literary reputation of the Scottish capital stood high—and justly so—in these palmy days of the *Edinburgh Review*, and where there was an intellectual atmosphere there must be a spirit of tolerance. But Shelley would not quit the Lakes without paying Keswick a visit, and seeing his good friends the Calverts. Southey was absent from home, and it is doubtful whether Shelley would have cared to approach Southey just at this time, when the elder poet had submitted, not a month since, to wear court laurels, and was represented by the *Examiner* and other liberal journals as an apostate of incredible baseness or contemptible infirmity. But at Greta

Bank Shelley was at home ; he who now possessed a daughter of his own old enough to cry for the moon, and who had endeared himself to the little ones at Chester Street, had not forgotten Mrs. Calvert's little girl. Somewhere in his luggage or Harriet's was a work-box which should be her own. Mrs. Stanger still remembers her impatient heart which beat expectant while the luggage was being unpacked, and her pang of disappointment when, to the surprise of Shelley and Harriet, no work-box could anywhere be found.

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By mid-October, or perhaps a little later, the wanderers had reached Edinburgh.\* The babe had borne the journey well, and Harriet was happy. Since last she had watched the wreathing smoke of Auld Reekie, what events, what changes ! The years seemed full of incident as she surveyed them, and seemed also full of happiness. Shelley found in Peacock a companion who, if too little ardent to be wholly sympathetic, was yet full of interest in things of the mind—a man of keen intellect and refined culture. At Lynmouth he had read certain of Peacock's poems, finding in them imaginative genius, wide learning, and beauty of versification, while at the same time he lamented the objects to which Peacock applied his powers. "Mr. Peacock," Shelley wrote to Hookham, "conceives that commerce is prosperity ; that the glory of the British flag is the happiness of the British people ; that George III., so far from being a warrior and a tyrant, has been a patriot."† With

\* They stayed at 36, Frederick Street. Mr. Rossetti writes, "In August Shelley came of age, and his first act was to marry Harriet over again in an Episcopal chapel in Edinburgh." He adds a note : "This detail, which I give in the words of an informant exceedingly unlikely to be mistaken, has never hitherto been recorded ; and the journey to Edinburgh has passed as being one of Shelley's motiveless and costly freaks." I find no reference to such a marriage in letters from Edinburgh, in which I think it would have been mentioned had it taken place. Certainly when Shelley started on the journey he had no intention of visiting Edinburgh. His motive in the expedition, I surmise, was to escape from the pressure of creditors, while paying a portion of his debts with the money raised on the post-obit bond, and expecting to come to an arrangement with his father. He was also pleased to render a service to his acquaintance Peacock.

† August 18, 1812. In 1819 Shelley described Peacock as "a nursing of the exact and superficial school of poetry."

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the Newtons and the Boinvilles, Shelley's closest friends of the summer of 1813, Peacock, who laughed at their enthusiasms and their crotchets, was not a favourite. "The Shelleys," wrote Mrs. Newton to Hogg, soon after the departure of her friends from Bracknell, "have made an addition to their party in the person of a cold scholar, who, I think, has neither taste nor feeling. This Shelley will perceive sooner or later, for his warm nature craves sympathy, and I am convinced he will not meet with it in his new acquaintance." But it was a happy characteristic of Shelley that he could enjoy the society of persons whose temper and disposition were widely different from his own. He was to a certain extent aware that Peacock could dwell only in the suburbs of his affections, yet he did not for this reason despise the pleasure of his company. "He is a very mild, agreeable man," Shelley wrote from Edinburgh to Hogg, "and a scholar. His enthusiasm is not very ardent nor his views very comprehensive; but he is neither superstitious, ill-tempered, dogmatical, nor proud." An acquaintance of a more enthusiastic temper was Baptista, a young Brazilian, engaged in the study of medicine in Edinburgh. Frank, warm-hearted, and of true refinement, he entered earnestly into Shelley's ways of thinking, and even became a convert to the vegetarian faith. "Queen Mab," though not intended for publication, was now printed; before the close of May it had been in the press, and a small edition of two hundred and fifty copies had been placed in the author's hands. Of these some were presented to Shelley's friends, or were sent to persons of distinction; a few were intended for America; some, it is said, found their way to Berlin, where they were offered for sale. In the summer of 1814 "the celebrated Kotzebue," we are informed, placed a copy of "Queen Mab" in the hands of an English traveller on the Continent, thinking it probable that so bold a production had not been issued from the British press, and might be unknown to an Englishman.\* To Baptista, in the ardour of his

\* This statement is found in a review of "Queen Mab," signed "F" (first

discipleship, "Queen Mab" appeared the revelation of a latter-day prophet, and he forthwith resolved to render it into Portuguese. The task thus enthusiastically undertaken was in part achieved. Shelley, after leaving Edinburgh, corresponded with his young admirer, and in London they renewed their intimacy. But in our treacherous English air Baptista's health failed; disease attacked his lungs, and at an early age he died.

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Shelley's negotiations with his father had not prospered. Between persons so alien in character and opinions it was almost idle to look for a perfect understanding. Towards the close of November Mr. Timothy Shelley was ill, and the interview arranged for that month had not yet taken place. Shelley thought of leaving Harriet with Ianthe and Eliza Westbrook in Edinburgh, and of coming to London alone. "My evenings," he wrote to Hogg, "will often be spent at the Newtons, where I presume you are no infrequent visitor." But when, early in December, he returned to London, his wife and sister-in-law, with the babe, accompanied him.\* Entries in Godwin's diary lead one to conjecture that Shelley, though lately obliged for his own necessities to raise money on unfavourable terms, was at this time endeavouring to aid the needy Skinner Street household in their distress.† On arriving in London, he saw much of Godwin and of his friends the Newtons; but before the year was at an end he had left the town, and was settled at Windsor in a furnished house, which he had taken for two or three months, thus finding himself in the midst of his schoolboy haunts, and at no great distance from Bracknell, where the Boinvilles still resided. But Prince Athanase found not the aged Zonoras, the friend of his boyhood, in any

noticed by Mr. B. Dobell), which occurs in *The Theological Inquirer or Polemical Magazine*, 1815.

\* On December 10 Shelley breakfasted with Godwin. He probably arrived in London a day or two before this date.

† On November 12 Godwin enters in his diary, "Shelley, deed, etc." On December 10, 11, and 12, Shelley was with Godwin at Skinner Street.

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wanderings to Windsor. Dr. Lind had died a year since, and with his death Windsor must have lost for Shelley its chief attraction.

While residing in Edinburgh, Shelley, influenced probably by Peacock, whose acquaintance with the literature and art of antiquity was considerable, had zealously endeavoured to carry on a study of the Greek and Roman classics, together with that of science and philosophy. "I have for some time given myself to study," he wrote to Hogg (November 26). "I have read Tacitus, many of Cicero's philosophical works (who is, in my estimation, one of the most admirable characters the world ever produced), and Homer's 'Odyssey.' I am now studying Laplace's 'Système du Monde,' and am determined not to relax until I have attained considerable proficiency in the physical sciences. I have examined Hume's reasonings with respect to the non-existence of external things, and I confess they appear to me to follow from the doctrines of Locke. What am I to think of a philosophy which conducts to such a conclusion? *Sed hæc hactenus*. . . . I have translated the two essays of Plutarch, *περὶ σαρκοφαγίας*, which we read together. They are very excellent. I intend to comment upon them, and to reason in my preface concerning the Orphic and Pythagoric system of diet." These were indeed high and arduous studies. From entry upon Laplace's "Mécanique céleste," Shelley was debarred by his imperfect acquaintance with mathematics, but in the "Exposition du Système du Monde" openings could be found from which to gaze forth on the laws of the material universe without first having hewn a passage to them through a forest of analytic formulæ. For Homer both now and afterwards Shelley's love was ardent and naive as that of those shepherd youths who, in André Chénier's Eclogue, watch the august countenance of the old blind singer, and give him of their apples and olives and bread. "Shelley's delight," writes Hogg, "was to read

Homer, and it grew and strengthened with his years. He had a copy of the Grenville Homer, bound in russia, in two volumes; the 'Iliad' in one, and the 'Odyssey' in the other; \* one of these volumes was continually in his hand. It would be a curious problem to calculate how many times he read the whole through. He devoured in silence, with greedy eyes, the goodly and legible characters often by firelight, seated on the rug, on a cushion or a footstool, straining his sight, and striking a flame from the coals with the shovel, or whichever of the fire-irons he could first seize upon, remaining in front of the fire until the cheek next to it assumed the appearance of a roasted apple. And he would read some sublime passage aloud, if there was any one at hand to listen, with extreme rapidity, animation, and energy, raising his shrill voice until it equalled the crowing of a cock; nor would he cease before he reached the end of the book, and then, closing it, he laid it gently upon the ground, and, lifting up his eyes to the ceiling, he exclaimed with heartfelt pleasure, 'Hah!' remaining for some minutes in an attitude of veneration, wholly absorbed in pleasure and admiration." †

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The outcome of his philosophical studies and reflections appeared early in 1814, in the form of an argumentative essay on religion, thrown into the form of a dialogue, and printed under the title, "A Refutation of Deism." It follows, with considerable vigour and subtlety of reasoning, the lines of thought indicated in the notes to "Queen Mab." Eusebes, a Christian apologist, would fain convince the deist, Theosophus, of the error of his ways. Theosophus retorts with an indictment of Christianity—its fallacious evidence, its imperfect morality, its parentage in the old, barbaric religion of the

\* I presume that Hogg must refer to the Clarendon Press edition of 1808 in two small volumes, which reprints the Grenville text.

† "Life of Shelley," vol. ii. pp. 373, 374.

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Jews, its offspring of wars, cruelties, and oppression in the later history of the world. Eusebes, preferring the method of attack to that of defence, confronts his opponent with the dilemma—"Christian or atheist;" for at least it can be demonstrated that the position of the deist is untenable. The contention is keenly urged, and in particular Shelley's criticism of the argument from design in nature is noteworthy. The deist is driven from his position, but not before he has developed a formidable attack on that of his Christian antagonist. "I am not prepared at present, I confess," declares Theosophus, "to reply clearly to your unexpected arguments. I assure you that no considerations, however specious, should seduce me to deny the existence of my Creator;" and with a promise that if he must make choice between becoming an atheist or a Christian, he will unhesitatingly choose the latter, the dialogue closes. Not alone by its long-sustained and closely woven reasoning does the "Refutation of Deism" show an advance on anything which Shelley had previously written in prose; there is a self-restraint in its irony, indicating the growth of his intellectual and moral powers. The book may be regarded as the last development of that contentious, argumentative side of Shelley's nature which found expression at an earlier time in the letters addressed by him under feigned names to eminent champions of orthodoxy, and in the pamphlet which led to his expulsion from University College. The title-page, borrowing a word from Pindar which Gray also had placed upon the title-page of his "Odes," announces that the dialogue is not for the many, but for the understanding few—*Συγερῶσι*—and in his preface the anonymous author explains that it has been printed in a costly form, "with a view of excluding the multitude from the abuse of a mode of reasoning liable to misconstruction on account of its novelty." The multitude seem to have been effectually excluded. We do not know whether the "Refutation of

Deism " was ever offered for sale; if it were, we may question whether a single copy found a buyer.\*

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\* To obtain a copy of the original is far from easy. I do not know that a Shelley collector has ever found one. It was, therefore, an odd accident that two copies should have fallen into hands which are not those of a collector. The first of these, which had been Hookham's, was purchased from me for the British Museum library, and from this copy the dialogue has been twice reprinted. The second, a much more interesting volume, which I picked up in Dublin, on a moving hand-cart of old books, is bound in calf, and has the name "Mary" lettered on the side; it is, I believe, Shelley's gift copy to Mary Godwin, and the errata, as recorded in print, are written by Shelley on margins of pages and between the lines. How it came to Dublin I cannot conjecture.



## CHAPTER IX.

## PARTING FROM HARRIET.

*(January-July, 1814.)*

CHAP. IX. IN the early part of the year 1814 Shelley was a frequent visitor at Bracknell, where he found an easeful resting-place in the home of Mrs. Boinville—the white-haired Maimuna—and of her daughter, Mrs. Turner. On one occasion Hogg arrived at Bracknell late at night, and stayed with Bysshe's friends; but Bysshe was away in London. In Shelley's bedroom was much to remind Hogg of its recent occupant; clothes were scattered about; there were books on every side—"wherever a book could be laid, was an open book, turned down on its face to keep his place." Three charming ladies entertained the mocker with cups of tea, late hours, Wieland's "Agathon," sighs and smiles, and the celestial manna of refined sentiment. "Such," he says, "were the delights of Shelley's paradise in Bracknell." Next day a French youth was his guide to the neighbouring points of interest—among these to Shelley's former residence, High Elms, and the brook in which, as the story was told, Bysshe had stealthily gone to sea, embarking on board such a vessel as that of Wordsworth's "Blind Highland Boy"—

"A Household Tub, like one of those  
Which women use to wash their clothes"—

and "rowing or punting his frail bark with a stick used in

washing, until the bottom came out." "He then," the faithful CHAP. IX.  
 chronicler goes on, "freely took possession of another vessel Jan.-July,  
 until the whole fleet of tubs had suffered shipwreck." These 1814.  
 nautical adventures served to diversify Italian studies, in which Shelley obtained some assistance from Cornelia Turner, and the homespun pleasures referred to by Mrs. Boinville in a letter to Hogg of March 11: "I will not have you despise homespun pleasures. Shelley is making a trial of them with us, and likes them so well, that he is resolved to leave off rambling, and to begin a course of them himself. Seriously, I think his mind and body want rest. His journeys after what he has never found, have racked his purse and his tranquillity. He is resolved to take a little care of the former in pity to the latter, which I applaud and shall second with all my might. He has deeply interested us. In the course of your intimacy he must have made you feel what we now feel for him. He is seeking a house close to us; and if he succeeds, we shall have an additional motive to induce you to come among us in the summer." These sound like words of a considerate and judicious friend.

Shelley's purse and his tranquillity had indeed been racked. "I lament to inform you," he wrote from Bracknell to his father on March 13, "that the posture of my affairs is so critical that I can no longer delay to raise money by the sale of post-obit bonds to a considerable amount. I trust that the many expedients which I have employed to avoid this ruinous measure will testify the reluctance with which my necessities compel me at length to have recourse to it. I need not urge the vast sacrifices which money-lenders require, nor press upon your attention that I put it out of my power to resettle the estate in any manner by conceding to their demands. Upon your good wishes and consoling assurances I rely with the most entire confidence. I know that you do not lack the will but only the power of doing everything which I could reasonably expect. But surely my grandfather

CHAP. IX. must perceive that his hopes of preserving and perpetuating the integrity of the estate will be frustrated by neglecting to relieve my necessities; he knows that I have the power, which, however reluctantly, I shall be driven to exert, of dismembering the property should I survive himself and you. I do not take the liberty of frequently addressing you, but I hope the urgency of the occasion will be thought sufficient to excuse the present exercise of the licence you permitted." Old Sir Bysshe was now in the last year of his life; although he had, once and again, shown himself friendly towards his grandson in former days, the old man's temper did not err through excess of amiability, and this appeal of Shelley's, if it reached him, fell on deaf ears. It was stated by Shelley's lawyer, in a letter dated April, 1814, that his family could not assist him during his grandfather's life, and that he had "used the utmost of his endeavours" to raise money on the entailed property for the payment of his debts, but "without success."\* Probably, in the course of these negotiations with money-lenders, a question as to the validity of Shelley's marriage, celebrated in his minority according to the rites of the Church of Scotland, had been raised; and in order to obviate all possible doubts he decided to act in the same manner as M. de Boinville, who, on returning from Scotland after his less formal and regular marriage at Gretna Green, had confirmed the ceremony by re-marriage in an English church. To Shelley it was now essential that no question should exist as to the legitimacy of any son who might be born to him. Godwin had doubtless been consulted on this matter, and Godwin's views respecting marriage were altered much since the first edition of "Political Justice" had proclaimed his revolutionary creed. On March 22 he accompanied Shelley to Doctors' Commons to obtain the licence, and two days later Percy Bysshe Shelley and Harriet Shelley were re-married in St. George's Church by Edward Williams, curate,

\* Medwin, "Life of Shelley," vol. i. p. 185.

in the presence of Harriet's father, Mr. John Westbrook, and CHAP. IX.  
 another witness.\* Jan.-July,  
1814.

But before this second marriage was solemnized, Shelley's tranquillity had been racked by other anxieties and troubles than those connected with money. His happiness in his home had been wounded and bruised almost to death, although he did not yet despair that healing and recovery might be obtained through the influencings of love. In recording the events which lead up to the parting of Shelley and his first wife, Hogg strikes the note of change on reaching the autumn of 1813. The sonnet "To Ianthe," written in September, has told us how dear the child was for the mother's sake, and how dear, with an added tenderness, the mother had grown for sake of the child. We know that Harriet in October looked back over the years which had gone by since her first flight to Scotland with a pensive joy of recollection, untroubled by the shadow of approaching sorrow. But, if we may trust Hogg—our only witness who descends from generalities to particulars—the dream of intellectual sympathy between Shelley and his wife was dissolving, or was already dissolved. We can readily conceive how she had grown from the ardent school-girl into a woman, possessing a definite sense of certain realities which make up no inconsiderable part of an ordinary woman's life. When Shelley set up a carriage and made a considerable purchase of plate, it was certainly not to gratify his own taste. Harriet could not dwell for ever in a golden mist of liberty, equality, and fraternity, feeding on roots and fruits, and sipping distilled water. Debts and duns were sorry accompaniments of the theory of human perfectibility. She was recovering from the dream and the illusion—for such they were to her—and was able to perceive her husband's infirmities. And he

\* It has been suggested that this second marriage was celebrated with a knowledge that Harriet was again about to be a mother. But this was not so. Charles Bysshe Shelley, born on November 30, 1814, was an eight-months' child.

CHAP. IX. could perceive hers. It is well that this stage in acquaintance  
 Jan.-July, 1814. should be reached and traversed by husband and wife, in order that a wiser, tenderer affection, clarified from the grossness of spurious idealizings and vain hopes, may root itself in earth and rise towards the upper airs. But the loss of first illusion is attended with risk, and jarring incidents during the crisis of such a loss are dangerous; it is well, just when we have buried a new-born hope, to be quiet for a while and mourn our dead. With Shelley intellectual sympathy—sympathy with his ideal aspirations in the case of a companion who ought to be the nearest and dearest—counted for much, counted for almost all. When in 1812, on her first birthday since she had placed her hand in his, Shelley uttered vows for their future happiness, it was his chief longing that she might retain her enthusiasm of heart even when time should destroy the beauty of face and form.

“Ever as now, with Love and Virtue’s glow,  
 May thy unwithering soul not cease to burn;  
 Still may thine heart with those pure thoughts o’erflow  
 Which force from mine such quick and warm return.”

What if now her soul should appear to Shelley to be withering under the influence of the world? We cite Hogg to bear his testimony, such as it is: “The good Harriet had fully recovered from the fatigues of her first effort of maternity, and in fact she had taken it easily. She was now in full force, vigour, and effect; roseate as ever, at times, perhaps, rather too rosy. She had entirely relinquished her favourite practice of reading aloud, which had been formerly a passion. I do not remember hearing her read even once after the birth of her child; the accustomed exercise of the chest had become fatiguing, or she was weary of it. Neither did she read much to herself; her studies, which had been so constant and exemplary, had dwindled away to nothing, and Bysshe had ceased to express any interest in them, and to urge her, as

of old, to devote herself to the cultivation of her mind. When CHAP. IX.  
I called upon her, she proposed a walk if the weather was <sup>Jan.-July,</sup>  
fine, instead of the vigorous and continuous readings of pre- <sup>1814.</sup>  
ceding years. The walk commonly conducted us to some  
fashionable bonnet-shop."

While Harriet, if we may believe Hogg, was thus falling away from her interest in things of the mind, Shelley was advancing with eager strides into regions of thought and feeling where she could not be his companion; was absorbed in Laplace, or Homer, or Tacitus; or studied in a translation the dialogues of Plato; or made acquaintance with the poetry of Tasso, Ariosto, and Petrarch in the Italian. In the society of Mrs. Newton, Mrs. Boinville, and Cornelia Turner he found a refinement of perception, a degree of culture, and an intelligent enthusiasm for art and literature which he vainly looked for in his own home. By Shelley's connection with his friends at Bracknell his subsequent conduct, in Hogg's opinion, was much influenced. His delight in their society might naturally have been a cause of uneasiness or heartache to Harriet; even if his affections were not drawn away from her—and this she may have believed to be the case—he must needs read her character in the light of theirs.

Still the good, common things of life—precious as daily food, or air and sunlight—establish a basis for wedded love and happiness more solid and enduring, perhaps, than can ever be found in our rarer trances of thought and mountings of the mind. The homespun pleasures of the fireside, mingled memories, and kindred hopes and fears, a blue-eyed babe to fondle and sing to sleep,—these at least remained for Shelley and his wife. Alas! Shelley's happiness in these was now infected with a subtle poison. Peacock has told us how the beauty of Harriet's motherly relation to her babe was marred in Shelley's eyes by the introduction into his home of a hireling nurse to whom was delegated the mother's tenderest office. Hogg would have us believe that Harriet was lacking

CHAP. IX. in the warmth and quickness of a mother's love, and he relates  
Jan.-July, 1814. how, during some surgical operation performed upon Ianthe, Harriet stood by narrowly observing all that was done, but, to the astonishment of the operator, betraying not the smallest sign of emotion. We may not infer from this that Harriet did not feel, but we learn that those about her could believe her to be hard and insensible. If words of tender affection and motherly pride prove the reality of love, then undoubtedly she loved her firstborn child. And should Harriet ever assume an air of pride and hardness towards her husband, it was surely his part to press forward and discover, by genius of the heart, the tenderness which lay concealed under her seeming indifference. Unhappily it was impossible in such circumstances to deal with Harriet alone; the inevitable elder sister—we speak from Shelley's point of view—was constantly by her side as counsellor, guide, and guardian. When Shelley fled to Scotland in August, 1811, he supposed that he was wedding a solitary girl, persecuted in her father's home, and turning to him for protection. How was it then that she had another protector—an ever-present custodian, in whom she trusted as the embodiment of feminine wisdom? How was it that he had wedded along with Harriet this Eliza Westbrook, whose touch was upon everything, and who seemed to Shelley to contaminate everything by her touch? We know how swiftly a fever of dislike could inflame Shelley's blood, could infect his whole nature, and, rising to detestation and abhorrence, could render every nerve a seat of throbbing anguish. That he put constraint upon himself, and checked the "overflowings of his abhorrence," was well; but such self-control, with one whose reserve of strength was quickly exhausted under excitement, must result at last in extreme fatigue of heart, lassitude, apathy, and prostration. We know Eliza Westbrook at this date too exclusively through coloured mediums to pronounce independent judgment on her character and conduct; but we know that Shelley

now and ever afterwards regarded her with horror,\* and it is CHAP. IX.  
 certain that Shelley's friends, though differing on various Jan.-July, 1814.  
 other matters, agreed in believing that her influence on  
 Harriet was used with most injurious effect.

Shelley, heir to a baronetcy and a great fortune, was now of age; it was natural that his wife's relatives should desire a settled position for Harriet, and the ease and elegance suitable to her rank and prospects. Unhappily she was married to a poet and a man of genius, for whom a fashionable life meant a living death—the extinction of his higher self, a thing not to be endured. And Harriet's greatest charm in Shelley's eyes had been, as he informed Fanny Godwin, when defending his wife from the accusation of being a fine lady, that in all her tastes and habits and ways of thought and feeling she was simple, natural, and plain. What if now she had set her desires on elegant apartments, a carriage, silver plate, and masterpieces of the milliner's art—in a word, on a life inconsistent with her husband's spiritual aims and aspirations? It is well to cite the statement of Thornton Hunt, who wrote with full knowledge of the views of Leigh Hunt, his father. "There can be no doubt," he says, "that one member of the [Westbrook] family had hoped to derive gain from the connection with himself [*i.e.* Shelley], as a person of rank and property. . . . Poor, foolish Harriet had undoubtedly formed an attachment to Shelley, whom she had been allowed to marry; but she had then suffered herself to become a tool in the hands of others, and the fact accounted for the idle way in which she importuned him to do things repugnant to his feelings and convictions. She thus exasperated his temper and lost her own. . . . Too late she became aware how fatal to her interests had been the intrigues of which she had been the passive instrument." †

\* "His violent antipathy," writes Hogg, "was probably not less unreasonable than his former excess of deference, and blind compliance and concessions towards a person whose counsels and direction could never have been prudent, safe, or judicious" ("Life," ii. p. 517).

† "Shelley, by One who knew him," in the *Atlantic Monthly*, February,



CHAP. IX. However the mischief may have been wrought—and at this day no one can wish to heap blame on any buried head—it is certain that some cause or causes of deep division between Shelley and his wife were in operation during the early part of the year 1814. To guess at the precise nature of these causes, in the absence of definite statement, were useless. We may rest content with Shelley's own words, in a paper drawn up in 1817, for use in connection with the Chancery suit which deprived him of his children. "Delicacy," he wrote, "forbids me to say more than that we were disunited by incurable dissensions." A week before the ceremony of re-marriage to Harriet in St. George's Church, Shelley wrote to Hogg, from Mrs. Boinville's house at Bracknell, a letter, portions of which sound like the tired moaning of a wounded creature.

*Shelley to Hogg.*

Bracknell, March 16, 1814.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I promised to write to you, when I was in the humour. Our intercourse has been too much interrupted for my consolation. My spirits have not sufficed to induce the exertion of determining me to write to you. My value, my affection for you, have sustained no diminution; but I am a feeble, wavering being, who requires support and consolation, which his energies are too exhausted to return.

I have been staying with Mrs. B[oinville] for the last month; I have escaped, in the society of all that philosophy and friendship combine, from the dismaying solitude of myself. They have revived in my heart the expiring flame of life. I have felt myself translated to a paradise, which has nothing of mortality but its transitoriness; my heart sickens at the view of that necessity, which will quickly divide me from the delightful tranquillity of this happy home,—for it has become my home. The trees, the bridge, the minutest objects, have already a place in my affections.

My friend, you are happier than I. You have the pleasures as well as the pains of sensibility. I have sunk into a premature

old age of exhaustion, which renders me dead to everything but the unenviable capacity of indulging the vanity of hope, and a terrible susceptibility to objects of disgust and hatred. CHAP. IX.  
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My temporal concerns are slowly rectifying themselves; I am astonished at my own indifference to their event. I live here like the insect that sports in a transient sunbeam, which the next cloud shall obscure for ever. I am much changed from what I was. I look with regret to our happy evenings at Oxford, and with wonder at the hopes which in the excess of my madness I there encouraged. Burns says, you know,

“Pleasures are like poppies spread :  
You seize the flower—the bloom is fled ;  
Or like the snow-falls in the river,  
A moment white—then lost for ever.”

Eliza is still with us,—not here !—but will be with me when the infinite malice of destiny forces me to depart. I am now but little inclined to contest this point. I certainly hate her with all my heart and soul. It is a sight which awakens an inexpressible sensation of disgust and horror, to see her caress my poor little Ianthe, in whom I may hereafter find the consolation of sympathy. I sometimes feel faint with the fatigue of checking the overflowings of my unbounded abhorrence for this miserable wretch. But she is no more than a blind and loathsome worm, that cannot see to sting.

I have begun to learn Italian again. I am reading “*Beccaria dei delitti e pene.*” His essay seems to contain some excellent remarks, though I do not think that it deserves the reputation it has gained. Cornelia assists me in this language. Did I not once tell you that I thought her cold and reserved? She is the reverse of this, as she is the reverse of everything bad. She inherits all the divinity of her mother.

What have you written? I have been unable even to write a common letter. I have forced myself to read *Beccaria*, and *Dumont’s Bentham*. I have sometimes forgotten that I am not an inmate of this delightful home—that a time will come which will cast me again into the boundless ocean of abhorred society.

I have written nothing but one stanza, which has no meaning, and that I have only written in thought—

Thy dewy looks sink in my breast ;  
Thy gentle words stir poison there ;

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Thou hast disturbed the only rest  
That was the portion of despair!  
Subdued to Duty's hard control,  
I could have borne my wayward lot:  
The chains that bind this ruined soul  
Had cankered then, but crushed it not.

This is the vision of a delirious and distempered dream, which passes away at the cold clear light of morning. Its surpassing excellence and exquisite perfections have no more reality than the colour of an autumnal sunset. Adieu!

Believe me most truly and affectionately yours,

P. B. SHELLEY.

I hear that you often see the N[ewton]s. Present my kindest regards to Mrs. N.; remember me also to her husband, who, you know, has quarrelled with me, although I have not consented to quarrel with him."

Shelley's happiness in his home, as is evident from this pathetic letter, had been fatally stricken; it is evident also that he knew where duty lay; he felt that his part was to take up his burden, silently and sorrowfully, and to bear it henceforth with the quietness of despair. But we can perceive that he scarcely possessed the strength and fortitude needful for success in such an attempt. And clearly Shelley himself was aware how perilous it was to accept that respite of blissful ease which he enjoyed in the Boinville household; for gentle voices and dewy looks and words of sympathy could not fail to remind him of an ideal of tranquillity or of joy which could never be his, and which he must henceforth sternly exclude from his imagination. Four days after writing this letter Shelley was at Doctors' Commons, to procure the licence for his marriage with Harriet according to the rites of the English Church.

This incident of ceremonious marriage altered little, if at all, the position of affairs. In April Shelley was once more at Bracknell, and Harriet was elsewhere. "Shelley," wrote Mrs. Boinville to Hogg (April 18), "is again a widower; his beauteous half went to town on Thursday with Miss West-

brook, who is gone to live, I believe, at Southampton." That CHAP. IX.  
 Eliza Westbrook had taken her departure was something Jan.-July,  
1814.  
 gained, but the gain came too late. The beautiful "Stanzas," dated "April, 1814," read like a fantasia of sorrow, the motives of which are supplied by Shelley's anticipated farewell to Bracknell, and his return, at the call of duty, to a loveless home. His delight in the society of Mrs. Boinville, Mrs. Newton (now on a visit with her sister), and Mrs. Turner—his too vivid sense that here were peace, and joy, and gentleness, and love, while in his home the hearth was cold and desolate—brought vividly before Shelley's imagination the position and the pain of one whose duty and love are divided; and mingling something of his own story with his fancies, he wrote these stanzas, which move to a sad, mysterious music, like that of a midnight breeze. It is moonless and starless night in the poem—night with its melancholy ebb of life and strength; and at such an hour the lover is summoned to bid farewell to a refuge as dear as this at Bracknell was to Shelley, and to loved ones as gentle and delicate in sympathy as he had found in Harriet Boinville and Cornelia Turner. The well-known poem may be reprinted here as a fragment of transmuted biography.

## STANZAS: APRIL, 1814.

Away! the moor is dark beneath the moon,  
 Rapid clouds have drunk the last pale beam of even:

Away! the gathering winds will call the darkness soon,  
 And profoundest midnight shroud the serene lights of heaven.

Pause not! the time is past! Every voice cries, "Away!"

Tempt not with one last tear thy friend's ungentle mood:  
 Thy lover's eye, so glazed and cold, dares not entreat thy stay:  
 Duty and dereliction guide thee back to solitude.

Away, away! to thy sad and silent home;  
 Pour bitter tears on its desolated hearth;  
 Watch the dim shades as like ghosts they go and come,  
 And complicate strange webs of melancholy mirth.

CHAP. IX. The leaves of wasted autumn woods shall float around thine head,  
 Jan.-July, The blooms of dewy Spring shall gleam beneath thy feet :  
 1814. But thy soul or this world must fade in the frost that binds  
 the dead,  
 Ere midnight's frown and morning's smile, ere thou and peace, may  
 meet.

The cloud-shadows of midnight possess their own repose,  
 For the weary winds are silent, or the moon is in the deep ;  
 Some respite to its turbulence unresting ocean knows :  
 Whatever moves or toils or grieves hath its appointed sleep.  
 Thou in the grave shalt rest :—yet, till the phantoms flee  
 Which that house and heath and garden made dear to thee  
 erewhile,  
 Thy remembrance and repentance and deep musings are not free  
 From the music of two voices, and the light of one sweet smile.

Early in May Shelley was in London. He did not yet despair of reconciliation with Harriet, nor had he ceased to love her. There is a tragic sonnet—one of the greatest in English poetry—by Michael Drayton, in which a lover, standing, as it were, by the death-bed of love, is heard bidding a passionate yet manly farewell to the joy and hope about to pass away for ever. And yet, until Death has set his seal on lips and brow, there cannot come the absolute blank of despair.

“Now at the last gasp of love's latest breath,  
 When his pulse failing, passion speechless lies,  
 When faith is kneeling by his bed of death,  
 And innocence is closing up his eyes,  
 —Now if thou wouldst, when all have given him over,  
 From death to life thou might'st him yet recover.”

Such a moment as this, and such a desperate hope as that uttered in Drayton's sonnet, find record in a poem addressed by Shelley to Harriet in May, 1814. It is the first of a few short pieces added in Harriet's handwriting to the manuscript collection of poems prepared by Shelley for publication in the

early days of the preceding year. In this piteous appeal CHAP. IX.  
 Shelley declares that he has now no grief but one—the grief Jan.-July,  
1814.  
 of having known and lost his wife's love; if it is the fate  
 of all who would live in the sunshine of her affection to  
 endure her scorn, then let him be scorned above the rest,  
 for he most of all has desired that sunshine; let not the world  
 and the pride of life harden her heart; it is better that she  
 should be kind and gentle; if she has something to endure, it  
 is not much, and all her husband's weal hangs upon her loving  
 endurance; for, see, how pale and wildered anguish has made  
 him; oh! in mercy do not cure his malady by the fatal way of  
 condemning him to exile beyond all hope or further fear; oh!  
 trust no erring guide, no unwise counsellor, no false pride;  
 rather learn that a nobler pride may find its satisfaction  
 in and through love; or if love be for ever dead, at least let  
 pity survive in its room.

TO HARRIETT: MAY, 1814.\*

Thy look of love has power to calm  
 The stormiest passion of my soul;  
 Thy gentle words are drops of balm  
 In life's too bitter bowl;  
 No grief is mine, but that alone  
 These choicest blessings I have known.

Harriett! if all who long to live  
 In the warm sunshine of thine eye,  
 That price beyond all pain must give  
 Beneath thy scorn to die—  
 Then hear thy chosen own too late  
 His heart most worthy of thy hate.†

Be thou, then, one among mankind  
 Whose heart is harder not for state,

\* Printed by permission of Mr. Esdaille. The spelling of the name "Harriett" is that of the manuscript, but was not usual with either Shelley or his wife in earlier days.

† *i.e.* "Then hear thy chosen one (thy husband) acknowledge too late that he most deserves thy hate because he has loved thee best."

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Jan.-July,  
1814.

Thou only virtuous, gentle, kind,  
Amid a world of hate ;  
And by a slight endurance seal  
A fellow-being's lasting weal.

For pale with anguish is his cheek,  
His breath comes fast, his eyes are dim,  
Thy name is struggling ere he speak,  
Weak is each trembling limb ;  
In mercy let him not endure  
The misery of a fatal cure.

O trust for once no erring guide !  
Bid the remorseless feeling flee ;  
'Tis malice, 'tis revenge, 'tis pride,  
'Tis anything but thee ;  
O deign a nobler pride to prove,  
And pity if thou canst not love.

*Cook's Hotel.*

It is evident that in May, 1814, Harriet had assumed an attitude of hard alienation towards her husband, who pleaded with almost despairing hope for the restoration of her love.

How Harriet responded to this appeal we cannot tell. But we know that there is a pride such as Shelley deprecated, and a superficial hardness possible to women who, though possessing, perhaps, many amiable qualities, are not large-brained or strong-hearted, which would be swept away by the wave of generous feeling and just thought in a heart and brain of nobler and finer mould. As far as we can ascertain, a fatal misunderstanding existed between husband and wife. We are assured by Thornton Hunt that Harriet of her own accord left Shelley. When next we can discover her place of residence—in the beginning of July—we find her at Bath, whereas Shelley, save for a brief interval between June 8 and June 18, had remained in London since the latter days of May. It may, indeed, be that Harriet had not ceased to love her husband ; the roots of love are not plucked up

in a day; but it seems certain that, whatever may have been CHAP. IX.  
 the cause, she maintained an appearance of hardness, and Jan.-July,  
1814.  
 refused to meet his advances of affection. The sense of what seemed to him a cruel and unconquerable hardness certainly was present with Shelley at this time, and the memory of it lived on with him into later years. In the copy of "Queen Mab" given by him to Mary Godwin in July, 1814, under the dedication of that poem to Harriet he wrote the words, "Count Slobendorf was about to marry a woman who, attracted solely by his fortune, proved her selfishness by deserting him in prison."\* It was Shelley's veiled comment on the words of that dedication in which he had addressed Harriet as "his purer mind," "the inspiration of his song"—a comment penned in bitterness of spirit, and perhaps with some of the injustice of such bitterness. He had married a woman who, as he now persuaded himself, had never truly loved him, who loved only his fortune and his rank, and who proved her selfishness by deserting him in his misery, misery worse than a prison—

"The cage  
 Of fettered grief that dares not groan."

These words of the dedication to Harriet were precisely the words in the volume which he could not bear that Mary should read as expressing his present mind; but his comment should be intelligible only to one who could interpret a riddle. "I believe," wrote Shelley to Mary on October 28, 1814, "I must become in Mary's hands, what Harriet was in mine. Yet how differently disposed—how devoted and affectionate—how beyond measure reverencing and adoring the intelligence that governs me!" And three years later, after Harriet's piteous death, he still felt her hardness towards him, though he

\* Mr. Forman has called attention to the fact that in his "Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman," Godwin mentions that Mary Wollstonecraft when in Paris knew and thought highly of a Count Slabrendorf, "by birth, I think" (Godwin writes), "a Swede." This may be the Count Slobendorf of Shelley's inscription.



CHAP. IX. would not now permit himself to give utterance to the feeling.  
 Jan.-July, 1814. In the sixth stanza of the dedication of "The Revolt of Islam,"  
 two lines which stand thus in the printed text—

"Yet never found I one not false to me,  
 Hard hearts and cold like weights of icy stone!"—

were originally written with obvious allusions to his cousin Harriet Grove and his first wife—

"One whom I found was dear but false to me,  
*The other's heart was like a heart of stone.*"

Yet Harriet Shelley's heart was indeed no heart of stone, but a frail heart of woman, capable of love, of grief, and of despair.

In May, Shelley's prayer to his wife had been that in mercy she should save him, weak and wildered as he was with longing for peace, from

"The misery of a fatal cure."

Now it seemed as if there might be no cure but this fatal one—to free himself for ever from the past; to bury the dead life and love out of his sight. In a volume dedicated to Harriet he had declared his views as to the conditions under which wedded union and its mutual obligations may cease, little imagining at the time that such words could have an application to his own case. "What law," he asks, "ought to specify the extent of the grievances which should limit the duration of the union of wife and husband?" And he answers in accordance with the revolutionary creed which he had learnt from Godwin's writings: "A husband and wife ought to continue so long united as they love each other. . . . The present system of constraint does no more, in the majority of instances, than make hypocrites or open enemies. Persons of delicacy and virtue, unhappily united to one whom they find it impossible to love, spend the loveliest season of their life in unproductive efforts to appear otherwise than they are, for the sake of the feelings of their partner, or the welfare of their

mutual offspring; those of less generosity and refinement openly avow their disappointment, and linger out the remnant of that union which only death can dissolve, in a state of incurable bickering and hostility. The early education of their children takes its colour from the squabbles of the parents; they are nursed in a systematic school of ill-humour, violence, and falsehood. Had they been suffered to part at the moment when indifference rendered their union irksome, they would have been spared many years of misery; they would have connected themselves more suitably, and would have found that happiness in the society of more congenial partners which is for ever denied them by the despotism of marriage. They would have been separately useful and happy members of society, who, whilst united, were miserable, and rendered misanthropical by misery." To discuss this matter in the abstract was easy. Human hearts, however, are not framed of doctrines and opinions; they are sensitive to strain and shock, and may bleed inwardly. To apply his principles to his own case seemed to Shelley a "fatal cure" for his malady. To sever the cords which bound him to one cherished in his bosom during two happy years, the companion of his wanderings, the inspirer of his song, the mother of his child,—this could not but be attended with pain and sore fatigue of spirit.

Since the day after Shelley's errand, in company with Godwin, to procure the licence of marriage, he had not once called at Godwin's house until early in May, when he came from Bracknell to London. His pecuniary affairs, though they had been slowly mending, as he informed Hogg in March, were still in a condition far from satisfactory; but Godwin was sunk even deeper in distress. With characteristic generosity, Shelley resolved that he would put forth all his powers to raise a sum sufficient to place above present anxiety the friend towards whom he felt a reverential attachment, and whose teaching had been for him—as he believed—an inspiring moral force. The sum was necessarily a large one—three

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CHAP. IX. thousand pounds, it is said—and to procure this in Shelley's present circumstances would be difficult, if, indeed, it did not prove impossible. In the course of monetary negotiations, Shelley's intercourse with Godwin was drawn closer. During the month of May and the first week of June the friends met usually twice a week, and when, after an interval of ten days (Shelley perhaps being absent from London for that period), they were again together, it seems to have been arranged that Shelley should henceforth join the Skinner Street household each day at dinner. At the first of these dinners with Godwin (June 19) Shelley renewed his acquaintance with a distinguished Irishman, John Philpot Curran, who, broken in health and depressed in spirits, had resigned his judicial duties, and now sought vainly in London society for some brightness in his gloom—a gloom little relieved by external lights, but irradiated ever and anon from within by beams and flashes of genius through clouds already gathering for the night.

In one of these calls at Skinner Street, in May or early June, Shelley's eyes first rested with interest on Godwin's daughter Mary, now just returned from a long visit to the Baxters in Scotland—a girl in her seventeenth year, with shapely golden head, a face very pale and pure, great forehead, earnest hazel eyes, and an expression at once of sensibility and firmness about her delicately curved lips. It is possible that Shelley may once have seen her as a child in 1812; in the following summer when he was in London, Mary was away at Dundee. Whether he saw her or not on previous occasions, certainly now for the first time he felt her rare attraction. The daughter of Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft had gifts of heart and mind such as Shelley had never hitherto known in woman. "She is singularly bold, somewhat imperious, and active in mind"—so Godwin described Mary at the age of fifteen; "her desire of knowledge is great, and her perseverance in everything she undertakes almost invincible." From her father she had inherited clearness and precision of

intellect, firmness of will, and a certain quietude of manner, CHAP. IX. which sometimes gave way before an outbreak of strong feeling; for under this quiet bearing lay her mother's sensibility and ardour, with an imaginative power which quickened and widened her sympathies. Though of a temper naturally more conservative than that of Godwin or her mother, Mary had breathed during her entire life an atmosphere of free thought; she could not live in Godwin's house and meet Godwin's friends without insensibly learning to consider the facts of life from the rationalist or critical point of view. Her father she regarded with a fond reverence and devotion; and cherished with peculiar attachment the memory of the mother who died when she was born, but whose face, winningly sweet and sad, looked down upon her from Opie's portrait hanging in her father's study.\* The second Mrs. Godwin had not made her home a happy one for Mary; and it was Mary's custom on fine days, book in hand, to turn her steps northward until she reached the churchyard of old St. Pancras, then partly surrounded by meadow-land and pasturage, and there by her mother's grave to sit and read.

If Shelley had never met a woman who united in herself so many high attractions as Mary, assuredly Mary had never known a being composed of elements so fine and rare as those which made up the nature of Shelley. It was easy to divine that some restless grief possessed him; Mary was herself not unlearned in the lore of pain. His generous zeal in her father's behalf, his spiritual sonship to Godwin, his reverence for her mother's memory, were guarantees with Mary of his excellence. The new friends could not lack subjects of dis-

\* Much of Mary's girlhood was spent with Mr. Baxter, who had fed upon Godwin's doctrines, who had been expelled from the religious body of the Glasites, and who on reading "Queen Mab" expressed the highest admiration for it. Though Mr. Baxter was no revolter from the social order, and though Godwin desired to preserve young people from the too early effect of disintegrating doctrines, it is obvious that an intelligent girl could not but learn in their company at least the spirit, though not perhaps the contents, of their creed.

CHAP. IX. course, and underneath their words about Mary's mother, and Jan.-July, "Political Justice," and "Rights of Woman," were two young 1814. hearts, each feeling towards the other, each, perhaps unaware, trembling in the direction of the other. The desire to assuage the suffering of one whose happiness has grown precious to us may become a hunger of the spirit as keen as any other, and this hunger now possessed Mary's heart; when her eyes rested unseen on Shelley, it was with a look full of the ardour of a "soothing pity." On June 8, the eve, it would seem, of Shelley's departure from London for ten days, he called at the Juvenile Library, Skinner Street. Hogg accompanied him, and on that occasion saw for the first time Shelley's future wife.\* "I followed him," writes Hogg, "through the shop, which was the only entrance, and upstairs. We entered a room on the first floor; it was shaped like a quadrant. In the arc were windows; in one radius a fireplace, and in the other a door, and shelves with many old books. William Godwin was not at home. Bysshe strode about the room, causing the crazy floor of the ill-built, unowned dwelling-house to shake and tremble under his impatient footsteps. He appeared to be displeased at not finding the fountain of Political Justice. 'Where is Godwin?' he asked me several times, as if I knew. I did not know, and, to say the truth, I did not care. He continued his uneasy promenade; and I stood reading the names of old English authors on the backs of the venerable volumes, when the door was partially and softly opened. A thrilling voice called, 'Shelley!' A thrilling voice answered, 'Mary!' And he darted out of the room, like an arrow from the bow of the far-shooting king. A very young female, fair and fair-haired, pale indeed, and with a piercing look, wearing a frock of tartan, an unusual dress in London at that time, had called him out of the room.

\* The date is fixed by Godwin's diary. It occurs to me as possible that it may have been at this date that Harriet went to reside at Bath, and that Shelley may have accompanied her thither.

He was absent a very short time—a minute or two; and then returned. ‘Godwin is out; there is no use in waiting.’ So we continued our walk along Holborn. ‘Who was that, pray?’ I asked; ‘a daughter?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘A daughter of William Godwin?’ ‘The daughter of Godwin and Mary.’ This was the first time . . . that I beheld a very distinguished lady, of whom I have much to say hereafter. It was but the glance of a moment, through a door partly opened. Her quietness certainly struck me, and possibly also, for I am not quite sure on this point, her paleness and piercing look.”

Before the close of June it was known and felt by Mary and Shelley that each was inexpressibly dear to the other; but though their hearts were one, they did not yet dare to think that the closest of unions was possible for them. Even this stage in their mutual approach had been reached by degrees. Shelley had put a certain constraint upon his feelings; had endeavoured to bear his pain with firmness; had shrunk from a confession. And it would seem that Mary’s pity, through some betrayal of agitation or of tears, had involuntarily manifested itself as but the veil of a deeper feeling, before they dared to lay heart to heart in what still was named friendship, but a friendship now without reserve. The fragmentary poem addressed to Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, in June, 1814, is the record of the hopes and fears, and joy and sorrow, of this brief period.

TO MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT GODWIN: JUNE, 1814.

I.

Mine eyes were dim with tears unshed;  
 Yes, I was firm—thus wert not thou;—  
 My baffled looks did [yearn \*], yet dread,  
 To meet thy looks—I could not know  
 How anxiously they sought to shine  
 With soothing pity upon mine.

\* Evidently the word “fear” which stands here is wrong. Instead of “fear” we ought perhaps to read “yearn” or “veer.”

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1814.

## II.

To sit and curb the soul's mute rage  
Which preys upon itself alone ;  
To curse the life which is the cage  
Of fettered grief that dares not groan,  
Hiding from many a careless eye  
The scorned load of agony.

## III.

Whilst thou alone, then not regarded,  
The \*        thou alone should be :  
To spend years thus, and be rewarded,  
As thou, sweet love, requited me  
When none were near. Oh ! I did wake  
From torture for that moment's sake.

## IV.

Upon my heart thy accents sweet  
Of peace and pity fell like dew  
On flowers half dead ; thy lips did meet  
Mine tremblingly ; thy dark eyes threw  
Their soft persuasion on my brain,  
Charming away its dream of pain.

## V.

We are not happy sweet ! our state  
Is strange, and full of doubt and fear ;  
More need of words that ills abate ;—  
Reserve or censure come not near  
Our sacred friendship, lest there be  
No solace left for thee or me.

## VI.

Gentle and good and mild thou art,  
Nor can I live if thou appear  
Aught but thyself, or turn thy heart  
Away from me, or stoop to wear  
The mask of scorn, although it be  
To hide the love thou feel'st for me.†

\* The blank occurs in the manuscript.

† I can throw no new light on the unfinished sonnet beginning "Yet look on me—take not thine eyes away." It seems not improbable that it was addressed at this time to Mary Godwin.

Although now Shelley was coming to believe that his CHAP. IX. wedded union with Harriet was a thing of the past, he had <sup>Jan.-July, 1814.</sup> not ceased to regard her with affectionate consideration; he wrote to her frequently, and kept her informed of his whereabouts. Unhappy Harriet, residing at Bath, had perhaps never desired that the breach between herself and her husband should be irreparable and complete. And when four days passed at the beginning of July, and no letter from Shelley reached her, she reflected on his strange and sudden ways, until her anxieties and fears, as to what might have happened, grew intolerable, and she determined to apply to Hookham for a resolution of her doubts.

*Harriet Shelley to Hookham.*

6, Queen's Square, Bath [postmark July 7, 1814].

MY DEAR SIR,

You will greatly oblige me by giving the enclosed to Mr. Shelley. I would not trouble you, but it is now four days since I have heard from him, which to me is an age. Will you write by return of post, and tell me what has become of him, as I always fancy something dreadful has happened if I do not hear from him. If you tell me that he is well, I shall not come to London; but if I do not hear from you or him, I shall certainly come, as I cannot endure this dreadful state of suspense. You are his friend, and you can feel for me.

I remain yours truly,

H. S.\*

\* To avoid embarrassing the text, I relegate an important matter to this note. It has been stated as certain "that letters from Harriet are or were in existence, written in moving terms . . . proving that Shelley at some time disappeared from her cognizance without making proper arrangements, or giving any warning or explanation of his intentions." The writer of these words will rejoice to learn that he is in error. I have traced out this assertion to its source, and I find that it arose from a mistaken interpretation of the letter from Harriet to Hookham printed above. The witness alluded to as authority for the statement saw indeed a series of letters addressed to Hookham—those from Shelley, with one or two from Harriet, letters written in their happy days; but he saw only one letter of a date subsequent to the commencement of troubles between husband and wife, viz. the letter printed above. It was hastily assumed that this letter had been written after some sudden disappearance of Shelley from Harriet's cognizance;



CHAP. IX. Harriet, as we may conjecture from this pathetic letter, would now gladly have retraced her steps. She feared that her husband might do some rash and desperate deed, and this she could not bear to contemplate. But the time to retrace her steps was now past. Her friend, her guardian, Shelley might still be, but never again her husband. From an assurance that she had ceased to love him, Shelley had passed on to a conviction that she had given her heart to another, and had linked her life to his. Here, he believed, was the explanation of the hardness and alienation of his wife which he had lamented in May. An Irish gentleman, named Ryan, had been intimate with Shelley and Harriet in the summer of 1813. On May 21 of that year he had dined with them at Cook's Hotel; on June 22 he was still in town, and he saw them from time to time. We may feel the most absolute assurance that at this date Harriet loved her husband, and loved him alone. Of Ryan we do not hear again until the summer of 1814. In a note to her transcript of letters addressed by Mrs. Godwin to Godwin's friend, Lady Mountcashell, Miss Clairmont writes as follows: "He [Shelley] succeeded in persuading her [*i.e.* persuading Mary Godwin to elope with him] by declaring that Harriet did not really care for him; that she was in love with a Major Ryan; and the child she would have was certainly not his. This Mary told me herself, adding that this

but Harriet wrote from Bath, and Shelley, as Godwin's diary shows, had been in London since June 18. He corresponded with Harriet, and it was the cessation of his letters which caused her, after an interval of four days, to address herself to Hookham. I may add, and it is important, that I have also traced back further than any other biographer the statement that Harriet on some occasion of supposed desertion by Shelley "had for herself and her child only fourteen shillings of ready money." The alleged fact was communicated to Mr. Rossetti by a correspondent reporting a conversation in which one of the speakers related a conversation of many years earlier with the bookseller Hookham. On my applying to the speaker whose conversation was reported to Mr. Rossetti, he declared that he was not the authority for this statement. Thus a conflict of testimony arises before we reach Hookham, whose statement, if ever made, may or may not be trustworthy. There is decisive evidence to prove that Shelley, when leaving England, was very careful to see that Harriet was provided with money.

justified his having another attachment. I spoke to my CHAP. IX. mother and to the Boinvilles on this point in after years. <sup>Jan.-July, 1814.</sup> Neither had ever seen or heard of any such person as Ryan."

A Mr. Ryan, however, was undoubtedly known to both Shelley and Harriet; he was known also by Mary to be a veritable man and no shadow, a few months after her flight with Shelley. "Letter from . . . Ryan," she notes in her journal for January 4, 1815. "Shelley had staid at home till two to see Ryan; he does not come" (January 6); "Ryan calls, but I do not see him" (January 7). It is certain that Shelley at a later date wholly abandoned the supposition that Harriet's second child—Charles Bysshe—was not his true and lawful son. But it seems to be equally certain that he never ceased to believe that Harriet, whom he had in May implored to return to his heart, whom he had then addressed as

"Thou only virtuous, gentle, kind,"

was false to him before he placed his hand for ever in that of Mary Godwin.

I am well aware that Shelley's judgment was in a peculiar degree liable to err. Shelley himself virtually admitted over and over again that he had erred in disclaiming the parentage of his second child. Yet evidence exists which makes one hesitate before asserting that Harriet had not, at least through indiscretions, if not through graver error, given occasion for her husband's belief that she was untrue to him. "The late Mrs. Shelley," wrote Godwin to Mr. William T. Baxter on May 12, 1817, some months after Harriet's death, "has turned out to have been a woman of great levity. I know from unquestionable authority, wholly unconnected with Shelley (though I cannot with propriety be quoted for this), that she had proved herself unfaithful to her husband before their separation. . . . Peace be to her shade!" Godwin, whose condemnation of Shelley for his flight with Mary had been

CHAP. IX. unflinching, was no partisan, although, undoubtedly, a motive  
 Jan.-July, 1814, existed for his seeking to soften the world's harsh judgment of Shelley's conduct; he had continued in friendly relations with Harriet after her husband's separation from her; he had no hostility towards a poor, dead woman; he was a man of kindly feelings, and of accurate habits of mind and of speech. In January, 1817, he had communicated to Shelley the statement made by his unnamed informant; and Shelley had found no difficulty in accepting the statement as true. "I learn just now from Godwin," Shelley wrote to Mary on January 11, "that he has evidence that Harriet was unfaithful to me *four months* before I left England with you." \* That Mary in July, 1814, accepted Shelley's view as correct we cannot doubt. In later years she made no explicit statement to any one; but it seems evident that she was at least assured that Shelley parted from Harriet in the full belief that she had forfeited all claim to her rights as a wife. "You may remember," Mrs. Shelley wrote on December 28, 1825, to Leigh Hunt, who had placed in her hands a manuscript article on Shelley's life, intended for the *Westminster Review*—"you may remember that immediately on reading your manuscripts concerning our Shelley, I wrote to you thanking you for it, and pointing out a few mistakes or omissions to be rectified or made, and I sent it back to Mr. Bowring with my approval. . . . I afterwards found that Peacock had it, and he mentioned to me a circumstance which I wondered had not struck me before, but which is vital. It regards Shelley and Harriet—where you found your reasoning on a mistake as to fact. They did not part by mutual consent, and Shelley's justification, to me obvious, rests on other grounds; so that you would be obliged to remodel a good part of your writing." They did not part by mutual consent, therefore either Harriet refused to return to her husband (but this Harriet herself declared

\* The italics, which are Shelley's, seem to indicate that hitherto Shelley had referred Harriet's supposed unfaithfulness to a later date.

was not the case), or Shelley refused to receive her as his wife; and in the opinion of Mrs. Shelley, writing in 1825, he was justified—at least to his own conscience—in his refusal. In 1839 Mary Shelley, while little desiring to bring an accusation against one who, if she had sinned, had also sorely suffered, still maintained that in all he did, Shelley, even when in error, had acted according to the dictates, not of egoistic desire, but of his conscience. “I abstain from any remark on the occurrences of his private life,” she wrote in the preface to the collected edition of Shelley’s poems, published in that year, “except inasmuch as the passions which they engendered inspired his poetry. No account of these events has ever been given at all approaching reality in their details, either as regards himself or others; nor shall I further allude to them than to remark that the errors of action, committed by a man as noble and generous as Shelley, may, as far as he only is concerned, be fearlessly avowed by those who loved him, in the firm conviction that, were they judged impartially, his character would stand in fairer and brighter light than that of any contemporary.” And in her note on “Alastor:” “This is neither the time nor place to speak of the misfortunes that chequered his life. It will be sufficient to say that in all he did, he, at the time of doing it, believed himself justified to his own conscience.”

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1814.

It was in fact, however, not only in 1814 that Shelley believed himself justified in what he did. Six years later, in 1820, when he was residing at Pisa, he wrote to Southey, inquiring whether his old entertainer and friend of the Keswick days were the author of an article in the *Quarterly Review*, which had spoken in cruel terms of his domestic calamities. Southey, in a reply kindly in purpose but unrelenting in the cruelty of its kindness, entreats Shelley to review his past life, and judge whether his pernicious opinions have not brought misery upon others, and guilt all but irremediable on himself. With solemn earnestness

CHAP. IX. Shelley responds to that appeal, and it is thus that he  
 Jan.-July, 1814, writes:—

“With what care do the most tyrannical Courts of Judicature weigh evidence, and surround the accused with protecting forms; with what reluctance do they pronounce their cruel and presumptuous decisions, compared with you! You select a single passage out of a life otherwise not only spotless, but spent in an impassioned pursuit of virtue, which looks like a blot, merely because I regulated my domestic arrangements without deferring to the notions of the vulgar, although I might have done so quite as conveniently had I descended to their base thoughts—this you call *guilt*. I might answer you in another manner, but I take God to witness, if such a Being is now regarding both you and me, and I pledge myself, if we meet, as perhaps you expect, before Him after death, to repeat the same in His presence—that you accuse me wrongfully. I am innocent of ill, either done or intended; the consequences you allude to flowed in no respect from me. If you were my friend, I could tell you a history that would make you open your eyes; but I shall certainly never make the public my familiar confidant.”

Thus it is evident that when Shelley parted finally from Harriet, he did so as it were under a judicial decree, not indeed in legal form, but issued—issued, as I believe, rashly—by himself as judge in his own cause. He had in May sought a reconciliation; now he had convinced himself that Harriet, although she still might claim from him the duties of a certain guardianship and watchful solicitude, could never again be his true and loyal wife.

It is no part of this biography to justify Shelley in all his words and deeds. The biographer's duty is rather to show precisely what those words and deeds were, leaving the reader to pronounce such judgment as may seem just. Still less is it the part of Shelley's biographer to cast a shadow upon the memory of Shelley's first wife. In many instances Shelley erred in his judgment of men and things; he may have erred here. Harriet herself declared that she had never ceased to love her

husband; that her heart was devoted to him. "I feel it due CHAP. IX.  
to the memory of Harriet," wrote Peacock, "to state my most Jan.-July,  
1814.  
decided conviction that her conduct as a wife was as pure, as true, as absolutely faultless, as that of any who for such conduct are held most in honour." \* "There is not a trace of evidence or a whisper of scandal against her before her voluntary departure from Shelley," wrote Thornton Hunt. "I was assured," Trelawny writes, "by the evidence of the few friends who knew both Shelley and his wife—Hookham, who kept the great library in Bond Street, Jefferson Hogg, Peacock, and one of the Godwins—that Harriet was perfectly innocent of all offence." It is right that such testimony as this should be set over against Shelley's strong persuasion, and the evidence of the unnamed informant of Godwin in 1817, whom we can neither cite as a person of authority nor cross-examine. No one who was not a rash partisan would assert that Harriet was not innocent. At the same time it remains certain that Shelley was convinced in July, 1814, that such was not the case, and remained of that opinion to the close of his life.

On July 7, the day on which Hookham received Harriet's distracted letter from Bath, Godwin accompanied Shelley to Bond Street. One who like Godwin loves to contemplate general principles, often to the neglect of particular instances, is not lynx-eyed to discover the secrets of lovers, and Godwin, in a peculiar degree, isolated himself from his domestic surroundings. Perhaps the keen little bookseller of Bond Street saw more of what was going on than did the philosophic speculator, and on receiving Harriet's unhappy letter he may have drawn Godwin aside, and enlightened him with a new

\* And again, "She was well educated. She read agreeably and intelligently. She wrote only letters, but she wrote them well. Her manners were good; and her whole aspect and demeanour such manifest emanations of pure and truthful nature, that to be once in her company was to know her thoroughly. She was fond of her husband, and accommodated herself in every way to his tastes. If they mixed in society, she adorned it; if they lived in retirement, she was satisfied; if they travelled, she enjoyed the change of scene."

CHAP. IX. and surprising view of the situation. However this may have been, Godwin on the following day had a serious talk with Mary, after which he wrote to Shelley. Mary's explanations and assurances seem to have been satisfactory to her father, but Shelley now ceased to dine at Godwin's house. So surrounded with difficulties apparently insurmountable was Shelley's position, that even in July Mary did not believe it possible that their union could ever be other than that "sacred friendship" of which Shelley's poem had spoken; or if love—and now they could not doubt the nature of their feeling—it must be love denied the happiness of lives made one. The copy of "Queen Mab" presented by Shelley to Mary bears an inscription, written hastily in pencil inside the cover in Shelley's handwriting, "Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, P. B. S.," and inside the second cover, also hastily written in pencil, the words, "You see, Mary, I have not forgotten you." The flyleaf at the end of the same volume has an inscription in Mary's handwriting, which is dated July, 1814: \* "This book is sacred to me and as no other creature shall ever look into it I may write in it what I please—yet what shall I write—that I love the author beyond all powers of expression and that I am parted from him dearest and only love—by that love we have promised to each other although I may not be yours I can never be another's. But I am thine exclusively thine

‘ By the kiss of love, the glance none saw beside,  
 The smile none else might understand,  
 The whispered thought of hearts allied,  
 The pressure of the thrilling hand ’ †

I have pledged myself to thee and sacred is the gift. I

\* I leave the inscription without further punctuation than that of Mary's manuscript, except as regards the verses from Byron.

† From Byron's "To Thyra," dated October 11, 1811, the first line being altered.

remember your words—you are now Mary going to mix with CHAP.IX.  
 many and for a moment I shall depart but in the solitude of Jan.-July,  
 your chamber I shall be with you—yes you are ever with 1814.  
 me sacred vision—

‘But ah! I feel in this was given  
 A blessing never meant for me;  
 Thou art too like a dream from heaven  
 For earthly love to merit thee.’” \*

It is evident that when these words were written no plan for effecting their union had been conceived by Mary and Shelley.

Godwin's talk with Mary on July 8, and his subsequent letter—this discussion of affairs by a person outside the charmed circle and the dream of love—probably determined Shelley to take a decisive step towards attaining the end at which he now consciously aimed. He could never again give a husband's heart to Harriet; he could not pretend to do this, and believing that she too would willingly accept freedom from the bondage of their recent wedded death-in-life, he resolved to propose to her a formal separation. Harriet—so he hoped—making no wifely claim upon his life or love, might yet accept what he could still give—such care and such advantages as should belong to one towards whom he acknowledged a peculiar duty, towards whom he felt bound by no ordinary tie. At least he would proceed openly, and lay his proposal before her. Accordingly he wrote to Harriet, begging her to come to London, where she arrived on July 14. What followed we know but imperfectly. According to Harriet's own account, the shock and agitation of Shelley's disclosure brought on an illness, alarming to one who looked forward to the birth of a baby in December, during which Eliza Westbrook was constant in attendance, and Shelley was by her side beseeching her to return to life and health. With a

\* From Byron's lines beginning "If sometimes in the haunts of men."



CHAP. IX. common womanly instinct, in which there is an injustice  
 Jan.-July, 1814, which men, the gainers by it, treat as excusable, Harriet's  
 indignation pressed less heavily against her husband than  
 against Mary Godwin.\* Shelley was depraved and debased—  
 no longer the man whom she had known; but it was Mary  
 who by her arts had wrought this change; she it was who  
 had ensnared Shelley by her witchcraft, by her sentimental  
 raptures at Mary Wollstonecraft's grave, by her avowals of  
 love; she alone had done this wrong, unaided save by the  
 pernicious lessons which Shelley had derived from Godwin's  
 philosophy. That Harriet consented to a separation, or yielded  
 to it as inevitable, recognizing the fact that it would be final,  
 we may reasonably doubt. In the account which she gave of  
 these events to Peacock, it was implied that no separation by  
 mutual consent had ever taken place; and there is some  
 reason for supposing that Harriet, even after Shelley's de-  
 parture for France with Mary Godwin, was not without  
 expectation that her husband would tire of the stranger who  
 had displaced her in his affections, and would return to herself.  
 It was when the certainty gradually forced itself upon her at  
 a later date that all was over between her and Shelley, that  
 he was indeed Mary's and not her own—it was then, in the  
 solitude and dull constraint of her father's house, that unhappy  
 Harriet's anguish grew to a height, and that she became  
 willing to try to forget it in excitement and change. But in  
 July, 1814, the very expectation that Shelley would return to  
 her might have induced her to appear compliant. We know  
 that Shelley, acting with frankness and a certain deliberation,  
 went through necessary formalities, obtained legal advice, and  
 directed that a settlement should be drawn up for Harriet's  
 benefit. We know that he departed for France with full  
 assurance that his action appeared to her not cruel or harsh,  
 but the action of one who still had a sincere concern for her

\* This is certainly true of a somewhat later date, and it is probable that her feeling was the same in July.

interests and her happiness. So little of a breach was there CHAP. IX.  
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1814. between them, as he conceived, that, with strange ignorance of a woman's heart, he hoped that Harriet might settle somewhere on the Continent in his neighbourhood. He quitted England, sincerely convinced that Harriet had been willing to release him from the bitter constraint of their dual misery, and that she might herself be happy under the altered circumstances. That he erred grievously in judgment in supposing that she could be happy is certain.

The last days in London were days of anxiety and distraction to Shelley. Suffering physically from sharp spasms of nervous pain, he sought relief, as he had formerly done at Keswick, in excessive doses of laudanum. It would seem that he was excluded from Godwin's house, although the latter, apparently desirous to restore happy relations between Shelley and Harriet, now and again wrote to one or the other. Perhaps it was at this time or somewhat earlier that Shelley begged Peacock, on coming to London from the country, to call upon him. "Nothing that I ever read in tale or history," writes Peacock, "could present a more striking image of a sudden, violent, irresistible passion than that under which I found him labouring. . . . Between his old feelings towards Harriet, from whom he was not then separated, and his new passion for Mary, he showed in his looks, in his gestures, in his speech, the state of a mind 'suffering, like a little kingdom, the nature of an insurrection.' His eyes were bloodshot, his hair and dress disordered. He caught up a bottle of laudanum, and said, 'I never part from this.' He added, 'I am always repeating to myself your lines from Sophocles—

"Man's happiest lot is not to be;  
And when we tread life's thorny steep,  
Most blest are they who earliest free  
Descend to death's eternal sleep." " " \*

\* Peacock adds, "Again he said more calmly, 'Every one must know that the partner of my life should be one who can feel poetry and understand philo-

CHAP. IX. Yet, notwithstanding his physical sufferings and mental agitation, Shelley acted with a purpose and with circumspection. If he could not meet Mary Godwin at her father's house, there was always that place, on the murmuring outskirts of the town, where her dead mother's body lay, and where the weeping willow drooped or fluttered to the wind—a place now doubly sacred to Mary, since on one eventful day Bysshe had here poured forth his griefs, his hopes, his love, and she, in sign of everlasting union, had placed her hand in his. The daughter of Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft was not restrained from uniting her lot with one whom she regarded as pure and noble and sorrowful, by scruples as to legality or by dread of public opinion. The ceremony of marriage was desired by both Shelley and Mary, but it was impossible, and they did not hold it to be necessary.\* Mary, like Shelley, believed that she inflicted no wrong upon another, and she could not question that she was bringing joy and strength and revival of life to him she loved. If Mary erred, the error was that of a girl who had not yet reached the close of her seventeenth year. To youth, swift and decisive measures seem the best; to break away from the past, to sever bonds of use and wont, seem then to be slight affairs. We do not know much at seventeen of the healing influences of time; nor have we much faith in the virtue of patching up a broken love. We are whole at that age, and have not experienced the remarkable effects of stitches and sutures. By Mary, doubtless, at this time Harriet was imagined as faithless to her bond of love—as cold, calculating, mercenary;

sophy. Harriet is a noble animal, but she can do neither.' I said, 'It always appeared to me that you were very fond of Harriet.' Without affirming or denying this he answered, 'But you do not know how I hated her sister.' It is evident that Shelley did not confide to Peacock the complete story of his alienation from Harriet.

\* In Shelley's "Chancery Paper" (1817) he expresses the regret which he felt in 1814 at being unable to exhibit to the world, "according to those formalities which the world requires, that my motives of preference towards my present wife arose from no light or frivolous attachment."

not unwilling, as Shelley believed, to release him from the misery of enforced marriage. Why, then, should Mary hesitate to accept Shelley's supreme wish as her highest law? Had they felt that their precipitate act increased in a serious degree the moral risks to which Harriet was exposed—one who assuredly not long since had been bright, innocent, and affectionate—that act would have been no error, but a crime. As things were, Mary's first and ruling thought was to deliver from weakness and misery the man whose life—measurelessly dear to her—seemed to be placed in her hands to save or to destroy. Shelley believed that, in endeavouring to remain a careful guardian of Harriet's interests, he did all that was now possible for him to do. "In me," he wrote to her a few days after his departure to the Continent, "you will at last find one firm and constant friend, to whom your interests will be always dear—by whom your feelings will never wilfully be injured. From none can you expect this but me." \* It was with strange ignorance of a woman's heart that Shelley wrote the letter from which these words are taken. Harriet, as he imagined, might look on at his happiness in Mary's companionship, and might receive from him, with gratified content, some minor gifts of sympathy and consideration. Had Shelley and Mary perceived that through self-denial, practised at least for a season, a union of hearts, strict and stern, could indeed have been attained, it may be that they would have found the reward of such strenuous self-denial in moral safety or diminished risk for Harriet. Whether this were so or not, their example would ever after have helped the lives of those entangled in like difficulties with their own, and have ennobled for us all the tradition of humanity.

By July 27, 1814, arrangements, unknown to Godwin and his wife, had been made for the departure of Shelley and Mary early next morning for Dover on their way to the Continent.

\* See the letter written from Troyes, August 13, 1814, printed in the next chapter.

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1814.

NOTE.—I may here point out, what has hitherto escaped attention, that some important passages of biography, transmuted for the purposes of fiction, may be found in Mrs. Shelley's novel "Lodore," published in 1835. In it, as will afterwards be shown, may be found an almost literal transcript from her life and that of Shelley during the weeks of distress and separation in London, which followed soon after their return from the Continent in 1814. In it may be found, in a transmuted form, the story of Emilia Viviani. In it also may be found a version of the story of Shelley's marriage with Harriet Westbrook, and his parting from her. Lord Lodore, however, in person and character, is not a portrait drawn from Shelley; he more nearly resembles Mary's conception of Byron. At Rhayader in Radnorshire, where Lodore passed his days loitering beside waterfalls and clambering mountains (as did Shelley in 1811), he succours, in midst of a thunderstorm, a young and beautiful girl, whom next morning he visits at her home, finding her "fresh as the morning, with looks all light and sweetness" (compare Hogg's description of Harriet). Cornelia Santerre is nearly sixteen years of age, and appears to Lodore gentle, blameless, knowing nothing beyond obedience to her mother, and untaught in the guile of mankind. "How proud a part was his to gift her with rank, fortune, and all earthly blessings, and to receive in turn gratitude, tenderness, and unquestioning submission!" "He found the lovely girl somewhat ignorant; but white paper to be written upon at will is a favourite metaphor among those men who have described the ideal of a wife. . . . Aware of her own deficiencies in education, she was the first to laugh at herself, and to make such remarks as showed an understanding worth all the accomplishments in the world." Lady Santerre, the matchmaking mother, is Mrs. Shelley's transmutation of Eliza Westbrook. "She inspired Lodore with the wish to gift her angelic child with the worldly advantages which his wife must possess; to play a godlike part, and to lift into prosperity and happiness one who seemed destined by fortune to struggle with adversity" (compare Harriet's writing to Shelley while he was at Rhayader, telling of the misery of her life at home and at school). Lodore and Cornelia are married; but the mother and daughter remain familiar friends, sharing each thought and wish, while Lodore is "as one apart, banished, or exiling himself from the dearest blessings of friendship and love." (So Shelley felt in 1814, while Harriet and the sister, who was to her as a mother, drew closer towards each other.) "An insurmountable barrier stood between Lodore and his happiness—between his love and his wife's confidence; that this obstacle was a shadow—undefined—formless—nothing—yet everything, made it trebly hateful, and rendered it utterly impossible that it should be removed." "The magician who had raised this ominous phantom was Lady Santerre. She was a clever, though uneducated woman. . . . She believed it necessary to preserve unlimited sway over the plastic mind of her daughter." When her husband would have educated Cornelia's mind, she is taught to look on his conduct as tyrannical; she learns from her mother "to view society as the glass by which she was to set her feelings." During the days of courtship Lodore had looked forward with pleasure to playing the tutor to his young wife, but a tutor can do nothing without authority; he had expected from Cornelia a girl's clinging fondness, but that was given to her mother. Lodore groans under a despotism the more intolerable as it could be less defined. He has no home, no single-hearted bosom where he can find sympathy. Lady Santerre never opposes him, but always carries her point in opposition to his. "He had expected to find truth, clearness of spirit, and complying gentleness, the adorning qualities of the unsophisticated

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girl, and he found her the willing disciple of one whose selfish and artful character was in direct contradiction to his own." Lodore, "with strong pride and crushed affections, gave himself up for a disappointed man. He disdained to struggle with the sinister influence of his mother-in-law; he did not endeavour to discipline and invigorate the facile disposition of his bride. . . . He scorned to complain or to war against the estrangement that grew up between them. . . . He thought that he perceived duplicity, low-thoughted pride, and coldness of heart, the native growth of the daughter of such a mother. He yielded her up at once to the world and her parent, and resolved to seek, not happiness, but occupation elsewhere. . . . Pride taught him to mask his soreness of spirit by a studied mildness of manner." Cornelia now embarks on the stream of fashion, while Lodore bids adieu to every hope of domestic felicity, and tries in public affairs to create new interests for himself. A daughter is born, but husband and wife are not drawn closer by this new tie. Lady Santerre is for ever about the babe and the babe's young mother. A drive, a ride, a walk with Lodore, was to be considered fatal to Cornelia: "the child was nursed by a stranger secluded in a distant part of the house," and during her recovery the mother seemed scarcely to remember that it existed. Cornelia goes to the country for her health; Lodore remains with his babe in town. "Here," he thought, "I have something to live for, something to love" (compare Shelley's letter of March 16 to Hogg). The husband and wife never can agree about the management of the child. Something akin to hatred of her husband springs up in Cornelia's heart. Three years after their marriage they are living in what may be described as a state of "warlike neutrality" (three years—1811-1814). At length Lodore, taking his infant daughter with him, leaves his wife, and writes to her, imploring her to break with her mother and join him in America, where they may live together simply and lovingly (compare Shelley's attempt at reconciliation in May, 1814). Cornelia declares that she has been "deserted;" is she now to follow as an obedient slave the man who has treated her so unjustly? Lady Santerre encourages her daughter in a cold rejection of her husband's advances. "He is as full of passion," says Lady Santerre, "as a madman, and more vacillating. . . . You are as lost as he, if you yield. A little patience and all will be right again. He will soon grow tired of playing the tragic hero on a stage surrounded by no spectators; . . . he will return and plead for forgiveness. . . . Firmness and discretion are the arms you must use against folly and violence." Cornelia, her mother declares, "must not be guided by the resolves, changeable as the moon, of a man governed by no sane purpose;" by showing herself determined, he will be brought to bend to her will. "You add cruelty to insult," Cornelia writes to her husband. ". . . You well know that I cannot, that I will not, desert my mother; but by calling on me for this dereliction of duty, you contrive to throw on me the odium of refusing to accompany you; this is a worthy design and it is successful. . . . Give me my child—let the rest be yours—depart in peace. . . . Give me my child, and fear neither my interference nor resentment. I am content to be as dead to you—quite content never to see you more." (Shelley in his Chancery pleadings declares that he left his children with Harriet at her request, though he much desired to keep them with himself.) Lodore crosses the Atlantic, and will not abandon his child. At New York he receives a letter from Lady Santerre, speaking of law proceedings and eternal separation, and referring him to a solicitor as the medium of future intercourse. Thus ended all hope of reconciliation, and Lady Santerre won the day. "She had worked on the least

CHAP. IX. amiable of her daughter's feelings, and exalted anger into hatred, disapprobation into contempt and aversion. . . . Lady Lodore was nineteen [Harriet's age in Jan.-July, 1814]; an age when youth is most arrogant, and most heedless of the feelings of others. . . . The act of Lodore, stepping beyond commonplace opposition into injury and wrong, found no mitigating excuses in her heart. No gentle return of love, no compassion for the unhappy exile, no generous desire to diminish the sufferings of one who was the victim of the wildest and most tormenting passions, softened her bosom. She was injured, insulted, despised, and her swelling soul was incapable of any second emotion to the scorn and hate with which she visited the author of her degradation." Lady Santerre bids her expect speedy repentance from her husband, and impresses her with the idea that, if she be firm, he must yield. She is looked upon by the public henceforth as "an injured and deserted wife."

## CHAPTER X.

FIRST VISIT TO THE CONTINENT (JULY TO SEPTEMBER, 1814).

WHEN, between four and five o'clock on the morning of July CHAP. X.  
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1814. 28, 1814, Mary Godwin stepped across her father's threshold into the summer air, Mary Jane Clairmont, daughter of her father's second wife by a former marriage, was at her side. Two months before—on May 23—Mary's sister Fanny had left the house in Skinner Street for a long visit to relations in Wales. Her maturer years, her gentle, unadventurous temper, her anxious, almost humble, conscientiousness, would have made Fanny a prudent monitor had she been at home during June and July, and had she been entrusted with the secret that lay nearest to Mary's heart. Jane Clairmont was of a different temperament and character. A dark-haired, dark-eyed, olive-cheeked girl, a few months younger than Mary—born on April 27, 1798—she was quick to observe, to think, to feel; of brilliant talents; ardent, witty, wilful; a lover of music and poetry, gifted with an exquisite voice in song;\* romantic in disposition, yet with a lively sense of reality; of untrained temper, yet at times affecting the girl-philosopher; making eager demands on life, with a capacity for sore fretting against the bars of fate; pleasure-loving, at times indolent, yet able to undergo much irksome toil; possessed of generous qualities, and of qualities dangerous to her own happiness and that of

\* Yet I am assured, by competent authority, that her sense of tune was very defective.



CHAP. X. others.\* How far Mary may have taken Jane Clairmont into her confidence we cannot for certain say. It was stated by July-Sept. 1814. Jane that she left the house in Skinner Street on the morning of July 28, believing that no more was intended than an early walk, and that on meeting Shelley at the corner of Hatton Garden, she was pressed by him and Mary to enter the post-chaise and accompany them to France, because she was skilled in the language of that country, with which they were unfamiliar.

For the weeks on the Continent which followed Shelley's flight we have two chief sources of information—the journal of Shelley and Mary, and the journal, in parts fuller of details, kept by Jane Clairmont. Each of these journals exists, in whole or in part, in two forms—the rough original manuscript, and a later recast or revision. The “History of a Six Weeks’ Tour,” published in 1817, with a preface by Shelley, follows sufficiently closely, with certain omissions and some additions and amplifications, the earlier pages of that journal begun by Shelley on the day of his union with Mary Godwin, written afterwards by Mary or Shelley as was most convenient, continued finally by Mary until death parted her from her husband, and resumed occasionally at later dates. Jane Clairmont’s revision of her journal is but a fragment written late in her life, and is remarkable chiefly for inserted comments and conversations of Shelley, reproduced from memory, or perhaps more largely created from hints of memory by her imagination after a lapse of half a century. This we may set aside as of necessity less trustworthy than the other records.† We turn to

\* The evidence of Miss Clairmont’s age, found in an entry in her own diary of 1820, is confirmed by various circumstances, and by a precise statement of Cornelia Turner. Writing late in life of the events of July, 1814, Miss Clairmont declared, “I was just turned sixteen, and was only two months before come home from a boarding-school kept by a French lady, and where I had resided for two years.” Her brother Charles Clairmont, whom she believed to have been born in 1796, seems actually to have been born in June, 1795; Godwin, in a letter to Constable of September 28, 1811, speaks of him as in his seventeenth year.

† See pp. 452, 453, for a specimen of Clare’s original journal, as compared with her late revision of it.

the first page of Shelley's journal and seek in it his story of CHAP. X.  
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1814. the events of the long July day, which opened for the wanderers in the London streets, before London was yet awake, and closed amid the moonlit waters and rising gales of the Channel.

"*July 28.*—The night preceding this morning, all being decided, I ordered a chaise to be ready by four o'clock. I watched until the lightning and the stars became pale. At length it was four. I believed it not possible that we should succeed; still there appeared to lurk some danger even in certainty. I went; I saw her; she came to me. Yet one quarter of an hour remained. Still some arrangement must be made, and she left me for a short time. How dreadful did this time appear; it seemed that we trifled with life and hope; a few minutes passed; she was in my arms—we were safe; we were on our road to Dover.\*

"Mary was ill as we travelled, yet in that illness what pleasure and security did we not share! The heat made her faint; it was necessary at every stage that she should repose. I was divided between anxiety for her health and terror lest our pursuers should arrive. I reproached myself with not allowing her sufficient time to rest, with conceiving any evil so great that the slightest portion of her comfort might be sacrificed to avoid it.

"At Dartford we took four horses, that we might outstrip pursuit. We arrived at Dover before four o'clock [where Mary was refreshed by a sea-bath].† Some time was necessarily expended in consideration—in dinner—in bargaining with sailors and custom-house officers. At length we engaged a small boat to convey us to Calais; it was ready by six o'clock. The evening was most beautiful; the sands slowly receded; we

\* This account gives no confirmation to Jane Clairmont's statement, that Mary and she left the house in Skinner Street without Jane's having become aware that more was intended than an early morning walk.

† I insert between brackets particulars not recorded in the journal, but mentioned in the "*History of a Six Weeks' Tour*," founded upon the journal, and published by Shelley, with Mary's sanction, in 1817.

CHAP. X. felt safe; there was little wind, the sails flapped in the flagging breeze. The moon rose, the night came on, and with the night a slow heavy swell and a fresher breeze, which soon became so violent as to toss the boat very much. Mary was much affected by the sea; she could scarcely move. She lay in my arms through the night; the little strength which remained in my own exhausted frame was all expended in keeping her head in rest on my bosom. The wind was violent and contrary. If we could not reach Calais the sailors proposed making for Boulogne. They promised only two hours' sail from the shore, yet hour after hour passed and we were still far distant when the moon sunk in the red and stormy horizon, and the fast-flashing lightning became pale in the breaking day. We were proceeding slowly against the wind, when suddenly a thunder-squall struck the sail and the waves rushed into the boat; even the sailors believed that our situation was perilous; the wind had now changed, and we drove before a wind, that came in violent gusts, directly to Calais.

"Mary did not know our danger; she was resting between my knees, that were unable to support her; she did not speak or look, but I felt that she was there. I had time in that moment to reflect and even to reason upon death; it was rather a thing of discomfort and of disappointment than horror to me. We should never be separated, but in death we might not know and feel our union as now. I hope, but my hopes are not unmixed with fear for what will befall this inestimable spirit when we appear to die.

"The morning broke, the lightning died away, the violence of the wind abated. We arrived at Calais, whilst Mary still slept; we drove upon the sands. Suddenly the broad sun rose over France.

"*Friday, July 29.*—I said, 'Mary, look; the sun rises over France.' We walked over the sands to the inn; we were shown into an apartment that answered the purpose both of a sitting and sleeping room."

Exhausted as Mary was with sickness and fatigue, she yet CHAP. X.  
July-Sept.  
1814. had a young traveller's pleasure in hearing for the first time the speech of a strange country, and in observing the novel costumes—towering head-dresses of ladies, high caps and short jackets of the women of humbler rank, ear-rings worn by men. The day passed not disagreeably, while the fugitives, weary from their excitement and the night of anxiety, awaited the arrival of their boxes by the packet from Dover. When packet and boxes, detained for several hours by contrary winds, at length arrived towards night, Mrs. Godwin, who on the preceding day had followed the fugitives to the sea-coast, also arrived, full of desire that Jane should separate herself from her dangerous associates and return to the shelter of Godwin's house.

"In the evening Captain Davison came and told us that a fat lady had arrived, who had said that I had run away with her daughter; it was Mrs. Godwin. Jane spent the night with her mother.

"*Saturday, July 30.*—Jane informs us that she is unable to withstand the pathos of Mrs. Godwin's appeal. She appealed to the municipality of Paris—to past slavery and to future freedom. I counselled her to take at least an hour for consideration. She returned to Mrs. Godwin and informed her that she resolved to continue with us.

"I met Mrs. Godwin in the street, apparently proceeding to embark for Dover. I walked alone with Mary to the field beyond the gate [a field, among the fortifications,—haymakers at work in it]. At six in the evening we left Calais, and arrived at Boulogne at ten.\* We slept there."

Travelling in a cabriolet, drawn by three horses running abreast, and urged by a queer, upright little postillion, with long pigtail and cracking whip, they pressed forward with all possible haste, for Mary's health suffered from the intense

\* In the "History of a Six Weeks' Tour" the hour of departure from Calais is said to have been "about three in the afternoon."

CHAP. X. heat, and they were desirous to have the journey to Paris quickly over. For a few hours they slept at Abbeville; then, with no other halt, drove forward by night and day, until, winding through the narrow streets and beneath the many-storied houses of Paris, they drew up about two o'clock on the afternoon of Tuesday, August 2, at the entrance to the Hôtel de Vienne.\*

July-Sept.  
1814.

The hot August days in Paris were for Shelley and Mary made up of mingled happiness and vexations. Money was needed to pursue their intended journey to Switzerland, and the supply expected from Hookham did not arrive. Fortunately Shelley could turn with some hope of obtaining relief to Tavernier, a French man of business, whose office was in Paris; nor would they be quite friendless if a distinguished Englishwoman, Helen Maria Williams, who under Robespierre had suffered imprisonment for her advocacy of the Girondist cause, were now at home, for Mary Wollstonecraft and Godwin had been well known to Miss Williams in former days; but Miss Williams, as it presently appeared, had lately left Paris for the country. Though for a while captives, as it were, in the streets of the great city, and longing for the mountain airs of Switzerland, there was much to set against their vexations and perplexities. While the sun shone fiercely, indoor engagements could be found—old letters and writings in Mary's box to turn over; books to read, and among these certain poems of Byron; with three small volumes of Shakspeare which Shelley carried about him, and the works of Mary Wollstonecraft; plans to consider and reconsider and discuss. In cooler hours they would venture abroad, and visit the Louvre or the Tuileries Gardens—too stiff and formal for their liking—or the pleasanter boulevards, with their leafy refreshment and that plashing cascade near the gate of St. Denis. And always there was the consciousness that each had found in the other the true friend and companion for a lifetime.

\* The journal is clear on this point; the "Six Weeks' Tour," which brings the travellers to Paris on August 1, must be in error.

The story of these days is told by Shelley in entries of the CHAP. X.  
journal. July-Sept.  
1814.

*"Tuesday, August 2.*—We arrived at Paris; we engaged lodgings at the Hôtel de Vienne. Mary looked over with me the papers contained in her box. They consisted of her own writings, letters from her father and her friends, and my letters. She promised that I should be permitted to read and study these productions of her mind that preceded our intercourse. I shall claim this promise at Uri. In the evening we walked to the gardens of the Tuileries; they are very formal and uninteresting, without any grass. Mary was not well; we returned, and were too happy to sleep.

*"Wednesday, August 3.*—Received a cold and stupid letter from Hookham. He said that Mrs. Boinville's family were reduced to the utmost misery by the distant chance of their being called upon in the course of a year to pay £40 for me. He did not send the money. Wrote to Tavernier. Mary read to me some passages from Lord Byron's poems. I was not before so clearly aware how much of the colouring our own feelings throw upon the liveliest delineations of other minds; our own perceptions are the world to us.

*"Thursday, August 4.*—Mary told me that this was my birthday; I thought it had been the 27th June. Tavernier breakfasted; he is an idiot. I sold my watch, chain, etc., which brought eight napoleons, five francs.\* Tavernier dined; the fool infinitely more insupportable; he walked with us in the evening to the boulevard; he walked with Jane.

*"Friday, August 5.*—Breakfasted with some friends of Tavernier. I committed the mistake of imagining a married woman to be a little baby of nine years old, and if her child (whom I believed to be her sister) had not possessed a more prepossessing countenance, I should have taken her in my

\* It has been stated that Shelley sent this money to Harriet, but I can find no evidence for this statement. The letter to Harriet from Troyes shows that she did not then need money.

CHAP. X. lap and offered her a lump of sugar. The ladies talked of dress and eating. We went with Tavernier to the police [probably about passports], to the Louvre, and the Church of Notre Dame, the interior of which much disappointed our expectations. At the Louvre we saw one picture, apparently of the Deluge, which was terribly impressive. It was the only remarkable picture which we had time to observe. There was Hell and Heaven also; the Blessed looked too stupid. In the evening we sallied forth in search of H. M. [Helen Maria] Williams. After numerous unavailing inquiries, we met at the Place Vendôme a Frenchman who could speak English; he offered us his services in the necessary inquiries. He took us out of our way for the pleasure of hearing himself talk; he told us that he had assisted in bribing the mob to overthrow the statue of Napoleon; that he was a royalist, and had been in the English army during the reign of Bonaparte; he was the first royalist who had entered Paris. He made us sit down in the garden of the Tuileries, and there, with a smile of abundant and overflowing vanity, confessed that he was an author and a poet. We invited him to breakfast, hoping to derive from his officiousness a relief from our embarrassments.

"*Saturday, August 6.*—M. R. de Savi [the 'author and poet'] breakfasted with us; we go with him to M. Perogaux, the banker, who refuses to advance money. I learn from Tavernier the direction of H. M. Williams. Secure that my statement of our history and situation cannot fail to interest, I hasten thither. She is absent in the country; the time of her return is uncertain. On my return to the hotel we go to Tavernier's office to seek for letters; we hear that Tavernier has letters for us and is gone to our hotel. We return. We had appointed to dine with M. de Savi at six; we keep the appointment at eight, leaving Jane to wait for Tavernier. M. R. de Savi had relinquished all hope. We return. Tavernier brings a dull and insolent letter from Hookham.

"*Sunday, August 7.*—Tavernier breakfasts. Promises CHAP. X.  
July-Sept.  
1814. money. The morning passes in delightful converse. We almost forget that we are prisoners in Paris; Mary especially seems insensible to all future evil. She feels as if our love would alone suffice to resist the invasions of calamity. She rested on my bosom, and seemed even indifferent to take sufficient food for the sustenance of life.

"We went to Tavernier and received a remittance of £60. We talk over our plans and determined to walk to Uri. We went to sleep early on the sofa."

Betimes next morning Shelley was up and abroad. Accompanied by Jane, he visited the ass-market to purchase an ass; for Mary not being strong might need to ride, and a port-manteau containing necessities must be taken with them, while the heavier luggage went by diligence. To fare on foot from Paris to Lucerne was, in 1814, an adventure which called for courage; an army had lately been disbanded, and reckless men might lurk in solitary places. The hostess of the *Hôtel de Vienne* set before the young wanderers a lively vision of the dangers of the way—"les dames seroient certainement enlevées;" but their spirits were high, and they were not to be deterred from a delightful enterprise by imaginary terrors. When evening came they bade farewell to hostess and hotel, drove to the barriers, the ass following their *fiacre*, and in the summer twilight began the march to Charenton. Unhappily their beast of burden was fit rather to be carried than to carry. "We set out to Charenton in the evening," wrote Mary in her journal, "carrying the ass, who was weak and unfit for labour, like the 'Miller and his Son.'" "We were, however, merry enough, and thought the leagues short. We arrived at Charenton about ten."\*

To replace the unserviceable ass in the morning they found a mule. "We sell our ass," Shelley records in the journal, "and purchase a mule, in which we much resemble him who

\* "Six Weeks' Tour."



CHAP. X. never made a bargain but always lost half." And so along  
July-Sept. 1814. roads level and dusty, between fields bright and waving with the golden harvest, advanced the little troop—Mary in her black silk dress, seated on the mule, which Shelley led at first; Jane, also in black silk dress, following, until, grown weary and footsore, she in advance would manage the mule, while Mary and Shelley brought up the rear. A small basket containing the bread and fruit for their noonday meal was borne by Shelley. The French skies and fields had not often looked upon a blither group of wanderers.

Yet a journey on foot and muleback across France in the year 1814 was not without its discomforts and inconveniences. Coarse fare, rancid bacon, and sour bread, beds "infinitely detestable;" rats which, Jane declared, put their cold paws upon her face at night; in the daytime, white roads inch-deep with dust, swarms of persecuting insects, a cloudless heaven and the wide oppressive glare;—such were some of the trials and hardships of the way. Madame the hostess's predictions were, indeed, unfulfilled—no marauders assailed them, and the ladies were certainly not "enlevées;" but the squalor, ignorance, and rudeness of the inhabitants of some of the villages through which they passed surprised and shocked the travellers. The wreck of recent invasion strewed the soil of France. Now they entered a town shattered and desolated, its houses lying in heaps of white ruins, its bridge, which had spanned the Seine, destroyed; now a lovely village embosomed in trees peeped into view, but when they drew near, the cottages were roofless, the rafters black, and the walls dilapidated. "We asked for milk—they had none to give; all their cows had been taken by the Cossacks." As the young English travellers gazed on such sights as these, their horror of war and the cruelty of brute-power grew deeper. On the fifth day of wayfaring Shelley, having sprained his leg, was obliged to mount the saddle; the road lay across a white expanse of barren country; while his companions towards evening stepped wearily by his side,

Shelley beguiled the tedium of the way by telling the tale of CHAP. X.  
 the Seven Sleepers. That night was spent at Troyes, in rooms <sup>July-Sept. 1814.</sup>  
 odiously unclean. A carriage being henceforth a necessity,  
 they bought an open *voiture* for five napoleons, and, selling  
 their mule, hired another with a driver to convey them to  
 Neuchâtel. Before setting out for Switzerland, which they  
 expected to reach within a week, Shelley wrote to Harriet a  
 letter, begging her to follow them by the Geneva route, and  
 assuring her that her best interests were still dear to him,  
 though now their lives had moved apart.

*Shelley to Harriet.*

Troyes, 120 miles from Paris on the way to Switzerland,  
 August 13, 1814.

MY DEAREST HARRIET,

I write to you from this detestable town; I write to show  
 that I do not forget you; I write to urge you to come to Switzer-  
 land, where you will at last find one firm and constant friend, to  
 whom your interests will be always dear—by whom your feelings  
 will never wilfully be injured. From none can you expect this but  
 me—all else are either unfeeling or selfish, or have beloved friends  
 of their own, as Mrs. Boinville, to whom their attention and  
 affection is confined.

I will write at length from Neufchatel, or you direct your letters  
 “d’être laissé à la Bureau de Poste Neufchatel”—until you hear  
 again. We have journeyed from Paris on foot, with a mule to carry  
 our baggage; and Mary, who has not been sufficiently well to walk,  
 fears the fatigue of walking. We passed through a fertile country,  
 neither interesting from the character of its inhabitants nor the  
 beauty of the scenery. We came 120 miles in four days; the last  
 two days we passed over the country that was the seat of war. I  
 cannot describe to you the frightful desolation of this scene; village  
 after village entirely ruined and burned, the white ruins towering  
 in innumerable forms of destruction among the beautiful trees.  
 The inhabitants were famished; families once independent now  
 beg their bread in this wretched country; no provisions; no  
 accommodation; filth, misery, and famine everywhere. (You will  
 see nothing of this on your route to Geneva.) I must remark to

CHAP. X. you that, dreadful as these calamities are, I can scarcely pity the  
 July-Sept. inhabitants; they are the most unamiable, inhospitable, and un-  
 1814. accommodating of the human race. We go by some carriage from  
 this town to Neufchatel, because I have strained my leg and am  
 unable to walk. I hope to be recovered by that time; but on our  
 last day's journey I was perfectly unable to walk. Mary resigned  
 the mule to me. Our walk has been, excepting this, sufficiently  
 agreeable; we have met none of the robbers they prophesied at  
 Paris. You shall know our adventures more detailed if I do not  
 hear at Neufchatel that I am soon to have the pleasure of com-  
 municating to you in person, and of welcoming you to some sweet  
 retreat I will procure for you among the mountains. I have written  
 to Peacock to superintend money affairs; he is expensive, incon-  
 siderate, and cold, but surely not utterly perfidious and unfriendly  
 and unmindful of our kindness to him; besides, interest will secure  
 his attention to these things. I wish you to bring with you the  
 two deeds which Tahourdin has to prepare for you, as also a copy  
 of the settlement. Do not part with any of your money. But what  
 shall be done about the books? You can consult on the spot. With  
 love to my sweet little Ianthe, ever most affectionately yours,  
 S.

I write in great haste; we depart directly.

As the wanderers advanced to the south-east the landscape improved. Vine-clad hills, with a river winding through the vale, or gently undulating country refreshed their eyes, weary from the bare white plain. "We rest at Vandevres two hours," Mary records in her journal for Sunday, August 14, "but walk in a wood belonging to a neighbouring chateau, and sleep under its shade. The moss was so soft, the murmur of the wind in the leaves was sweeter than Æolian music, we forgot that we were in France or in the world for a time." On quitting Besançon by its ancient rock-hewn gateway, they faced an amphitheatre of hills, and were delighted by the approach to mountain scenery; but the driver from the plains of Troyes seemed scared by the climbing roads and overhanging precipices. He insisted upon resting for the night at Mort, a miserable village which afforded but a single room for

the travellers and their surly muleteer. "To go into such beds as were here," Jane writes in her journal, "was im-possible. Perhaps never dirt was equal to the dirt we saw. We fled away and climbed some wild rocks, and sat there reading till the sun laid down to rest. [Mary's journal records that she and Shelley read part of her mother's tale, 'Mary: a fiction.'] I read 'As You Like It,' and found the wild and romantic touches of this play very accordant with the scene before me, and my feeling. It was indeed a lovely evening. How much is lost by those who pass their lives in cities! they are never visited by those sweet feelings which to recollect alone is heaven. It is fortunate for them that they imagine themselves happy. How boundless and terrific would be their surprise if they could suddenly become philosophers and view things in their true and beautiful point of view! We sleep all night by the kitchen fire; Shelley much disturbed by the creaking door, the screams of a poor smothered child, and the *filie* who washed the glasses."

CHAP. X.  
July-Sept.  
1814.

This comfortless night preceded the wanderers' last day in France (August 18)—a day of annoyance, caused by the perverse humours of the muleteer, who drove far in advance, leaving them to trudge behind him, yet a day of memorable delights, heralded by the miraculous beauty of a dawn, and crowned by the miraculous beauty of a sunset and moonlight among the mountains. Let Mary's journal tell some of the surprises of joy on that day of travellers' misadventure: "From the summit of one of the hills we see the whole expanse of the valley filled with a white undulating mist, over which the piny hills pierced like islands. The sun had just risen, and a ray of the red light lay on the waves of this fluctuating vapour. To the west, opposite the sun, it seemed driven by the light against the rock in immense masses of foaming cloud, until it becomes lost in the distance, mixing its tints with the fleecy sky. At Noë [in a noontide of intense heat], whilst our postilion waited, we walked into the forest of

CHAP. X. pines; it was a scene of enchantment, where every sound and sight contributed to charm. Our mossy seat in the deepest recesses of the wood was inclosed from the world by an impenetrable veil. . . . The evening [a few leagues now from Pontarlier] was most beautiful; the horned moon hung in the light of sunset, which threw a glow of unusual depth of redness above the piny mountains and the dark deep valleys which they included. . . . The moon becomes yellow, and hangs close to the woody horizon. It is dark before we arrive at Pontarlier. The postilion tells many lies. We sleep, for the first time in France, in a clean bed.”\*

\* I have thought it desirable to give the words of the journal rather than the recast of these sentences as found in the “Six Weeks’ Tour,” with which, however, they agree in every essential. And here it may be worth while to present the curious reader with the record in Jane’s journal of these incidents, and with her revision of the same made late in her life, perhaps with a view to publication. “*Thursday, 18.*—Set off at four; the morning balmy and refreshing. Breakfast somewhere; the road still continues beautiful; immense forests on each side of us. Reach Noë at twelve; the postilion will stop at a most terrifically dirty inn. We go into the woods; climb through a most beautiful retired glen which ascends, and the pines hang so thickly over that it forms a deep and nearly impenetrable shade. The rocks are here sometimes bare and awful, and then become sweetly soft, green, and mossy; they rise over one another, and are entirely covered with pines. Return at two to the village and find the voiturier departed. Walk to Maison Neuve; dine there; a most detestable shrill wretch that gave one the headache to hear her. Walk to L’Avrine; the man not there. Procure a cart to Pontarlier; sup there; the voiturier makes a thousand excuses—all falsehoods. Shelley’s ankle very bad all the way; go to bed much fatigued.” In the revised version, Jane introduces the following conversation in the wood at Noë: “Shelley said there would come a time when nowhere on the earth would there be a dirty cottage to be found. Mary asked what time would elapse before that time would come; he said, ‘Perhaps a thousand years.’ We said, ‘Perhaps it would never come, as it was so difficult to persuade the poor to be clean.’ But he said it must infallibly arrive, for Society was progressive, and was evidently moving forwards towards perfectibility; and then he described the career made by man. I wish I could remember the whole, but half has slipped out of my memory—only I recollect men were first savages; then nomadic tribes wandering from place to place with their flocks; then they formed into villages; then to towns; and then improvement in mind, morals, comforts, etc., set in; and then next came the Arts; and then the Sciences; and from this point Society would go on step by step to almost perfection.” At Pontarlier the driver is found. “He was very impertinent; asked why we had stayed so long in the woods—there was nothing to see in woods; said he had waited two hours at Noë expecting us to return, and then had driven on; it was all our faults, he said; and, after thinking a while, Shelley remarked that the driver was right, and it was his dissertation upon the perfectibility of

Next day, as the travellers approached Neuchâtel, the snow-clad Alps hung on the far horizon, cloud-like, dazzling, and of visionary splendour. At the Neuchâtel post-office (August 20) no letters; no letters, indeed, to be expected for another week. The sixty pounds obtained in Paris had now nearly disappeared, and something should be done. "Shelley," the journal informs us, "goes to the banker's, who promises an answer in two hours. At the conclusion of the time he sends for Shelley, and, to our astonishment and consolation, Shelley returns staggering under the weight of a large canvas bag full of silver. Shelley alone looks grave on the occasion, for he alone clearly apprehends that francs and écus and louis d'ors are like the white and flying cloud of noon, that is gone before one can say 'Jack Robinson.'" Two days more in a voiture, of which they were now heartily tired—Shelley's weariness, however, assuming the form of a "jocosely horrible mood"—brought them within a short distance of Lucerne, and by the forenoon of August 23—a most divine day—they were advancing in a small boat along the waters of the lake, with its majestic mountain-heights, and rock, and pine-forest, and verdant pastoral slopes around them. At Brunnen, in sight of William Tell's Chapel, a resting-place was found, and, as the mountains darkened in the twilight, they lingered by the shores of the lake, musing, conversing, and drinking in the freshness of the quickening breeze.

Man that had put us into such difficulties. Mary laughed and said, 'Men always were the sources of a thousand difficulties.' Then Shelley asked her why she of a sudden looked so sad, and she answered, 'I was thinking of my father, and wondering what he was now feeling.' He then said, 'Do you mean that as a reproach to me?' and she answered, 'Oh no! don't let us think more about it.' But I think something or other had brought her flight into her mind and the sorrow her father must feel—and she loves him so much." The reader can decide for himself how far the amplification of the original diary is trustworthy. On sight of the Alps, according to Jane's *revised* journal, Shelley exclaims, "How great is my rapture! I a fiery man, with my heart full of youth, and with my beloved by my side—I behold those lordly immeasurable Alps. They look like a second world gleaming on one; they look like dreams more than realities, they are so pure and heavenly white."

CHAP. X.July-Sept.  
1814.

When morning dawned a furious south-wind blew, and the waters were in wild commotion. To remain in their present abode could not be thought of with comfort, for its uncleanness had been "terrible" to Mary; to proceed by water to Flüelen was impossible. Finding that they could not obtain a house at Brunnen, the wanderers resolved to content themselves with two unfurnished rooms in the big, ugly "Château," and these they hired for six months at a guinea a month. Beds were moved into the empty rooms; a stove, lit with difficulty, diffused its unwholesome heat; and while cold rains fell without, Shelley beguiled the hours by dictating to Mary the opening pages of a romance. On the preceding afternoon Mary and Shelley had walked to the shore of the lake, and read the description of the siege of Jerusalem in Tacitus. With the siege of Jerusalem the romance of "The Assassins" opens.

Shelley with his young companions, had fled from London to this solitude among the mountains, outlaws—innocent outlaws, as they held, who refused submission to the social rule, yet shaped their conduct according to the conclusions of the reason and the legitimate dictates of the heart. His imagination, wandering through dim centuries and distant lands, found a spiritual kinship between his small household, isolated from the great world by lake and snowy peaks, and certain ancient exiles from Jerusalem, who pitched their tents in the valley of Bethzatanai among "mountains of everlasting snow"—a tribe known by the dreaded name of "Assassins," yet gentle and benign, who "acknowledged no laws but those of God," and "modelled their conduct towards their fellow-men by the conclusions of their individual judgment on the practical application of these laws;" who "esteemed the human understanding to be the paramount rule of human conduct;" who with a religious temper united "an intrepid spirit of inquiry as to the correctest mode of acting in particular instances of conduct that occur among men;" who fled to the solitudes of Lebanon

to escape the "poison of a diseased civilization"—"they would no longer owe their very existence to the vices, the fears, and the follies of mankind. Love, friendship, and philanthropy would now be the characteristic disposers of their industry;" who in a community falsely named "civilized" should upon principle wage war against the impious laws of society, and must themselves become the "victims of calumny and persecution;" but who in their Lebanonian vale might love and be beloved. Full of courage and of active virtue, living for the highest service of man, they might here find God—learning to identify this mysterious friend and benefactor "with the delight that is bred among the solitary rocks, and has its dwelling alike in the changing colours of the clouds and the inmost recesses of the caverns;" "they were already disembodied spirits; they were already the inhabitants of Paradise;" and here Albedir and Khaled might watch their children grow, and the very snakes—those wronged outcasts of creation—might be the loving playfellows of the Arabian boy and girl.\*

From his dream of "The Assassins," brought face to face with the wrongs and sorrows of the world in the person of the Wandering Jew, Shelley was rudely awakened by the discomforts of residence at the Château, and by the serious considerations that only twenty-eight pounds remained in his purse, that no addition to this slender store of money could be counted on before December, and that he was here many hundreds of miles from his basis of supplies. The rooms in the Château had been engaged until the following January; the old Abbé—not too well received—and the Médecin had called to pay their respects to the new-comers; but on August 27 a surprise awaited the good folk of Brunnen—the six months' residence had suddenly shrunk to one of forty-eight hours; at seven o'clock on the morning of that day the young

\* The quotations are from the unfinished tale of "The Assassins." It is impossible in a paragraph to bring out with fulness the fact that the tale was an inspiration of Shelley's sojourn in Switzerland, August, 1814.



CHAP. X. English people took boat in a downpour of rain, and bade  
 July-Sept. 1814. farewell to Schwytz and Uri, directing their boatmen to row  
 westward toward Lucerne.

"Get up at five"—thus Jane in her journal records the events of the morning—"bustle, toil, and trouble; most laughable to think of our going to England the second day after we entered a new house for six months: all because the stove don't suit. As we left Dover, and England's white cliffs were retiring, I said to myself, 'I shall never see these more,' and now I am going to England again—dear England. After having travelled and viewed the follies of other nations, my own country appears the most reasonable and the most enlightened. It is now six o'clock; we shall set off in a moment. What will the Abbé and the Médecin say?"

Shelley had decided that immediate return to London was unavoidable, and after his late experiences of voiture and muleback, he judged that the least costly mode of travel was by water. Having rested at Lucerne, where Shelley read "King Lear" aloud, and continued his romance of "The Assassins," the travellers were at early morning on the green waters of the Reuss, descending through rocks and rapids, in the public conveyance—*diligence par eau*—to Lauffenburg. The rain fell ceaseless, and their fellow-voyagers—"uncleanly animals" who smoked prodigiously, and were "exceedingly disgusting"—were an oppressive presence, spoiling some of the delight in rocky bank and breaking wave, and the swift shoot of the boat from watery height to hollow. The brutal rudeness of the fellows angrily contesting for seats "provoked Shelley to knock one of the foremost down. He did not return the blow, but continued his vociferations until the boatmen interfered, and provided us with other seats."

At six or seven o'clock in the evening of August 29, the Rhine bore them, cold and comfortless, under the high roofs and spires of Bâle. The record of the next day—a memorable anniversary—stands thus in Mary's journal:—

"*Tuesday, August 30.*—It is Mary's birthday (17). We do CHAP. X.  
 not solemnize this day in comfort. We expect to be not <sup>July-Sept.</sup>  
 happier but more at our ease before the year passes. We <sup>1814.</sup>  
 leave Basle by the boat that we had engaged [a boat laden  
 with merchandise]; the wind is violently against us; we stop  
 at Shaufane \* and sleep there. The Rhine is violently rapid  
 to-day, and although interrupted by no rocks is swollen with  
 high waves; it is full of little islands, green and beautiful.  
 Before we arrived at Shaufane the river became suddenly  
 narrow, and the boat dashed with inconceivable rapidity  
 round the base of a rocky hill covered with pines.

"A ruined tower, with its desolated windows, stood on the  
 summit of another hill that jutted into the river; beyond, the  
 sunset was illumining the mountains and the clouds, and cast-  
 ing the reflection of its hues on the agitated river. The  
 brilliance and colourings in the circling whirlpools of the  
 stream was an appearance entirely new, and most beautiful."  
 "The shades grew darker," adds the "History of a Six Weeks'  
 Tour," "as the sun descended below the horizon, and after we  
 had landed, as we walked to our inn round a beautiful bay,  
 the full moon arose with divine splendour, casting its silver  
 light on the before purpled waters." And so with a festival in  
 the heavens closed this birthday on which the voyagers bade  
 adieu to Switzerland.

The descent of the Rhine from Bâle to Cologne, accom-  
 plished in a week, now in a slight canoe borne forward by the  
 steadfast current, now in the ungainly public boat, was an  
 adventure the delights of which more than compensated the  
 inconveniences. Vine-clad hills castle-crowned, wooded  
 island, village and town, went by, and the songs of the  
 vintagers were heard above the swirl and sweep of the river.  
 Their companions changed as they went along from the  
 Strassburg students—"Schwitz, a rather handsome, good-

\* The name in the journal is either Shauphane or Thauphane. I cannot  
 elsewhere find either name.

CHAP. X. tempered young man; Hoff, a kind of shapeless animal, with a heavy, ugly German face; and Schneider, who was nearly an idiot"—to less agreeable smoking and drinking and swaggering Teutons; but the English party sufficiently maintained its independence. "We read Shakespeare," Mary's journal records. "Our companions in voyage are tolerable. We frightened from us one man who spoke English, and whom we did not like, by talking of cutting off kings' heads." And Jane, relating more fully a traveller's pleasures and annoyance: "We had a most horrid set on board. Nothing could surpass the disagreeable manners that prevailed in the cabin below—drinking, smoking, singing, and cracking jokes of a disagreeable nature. We sat upon the deck the whole day with one or two tolerable men, who smoked, it is true, but were brought to own it was wrong. Among these, two sat talking with us almost the whole day; one was a man that pretended to something, and the other an agriculturist going out to [? word undecipherable], with no pretensions to anything but an unaffected simplicity and good nature. We had on board, besides, a schoolmaster who spoke a little English. The latter and the man of Pretensions sung many German airs which I admired very much. As we were just entering the dangerous defile [of the Rhine], the man of Pretensions turned to us and said, 'Allons, il faut prier le bon Dieu;' we laughed; he answered, 'Eh bien! donc il faut chanter;' the schoolmaster immediately began, and they sang an animated German song, which had a much finer effect when seconded by the breaking of the waves over the rocks."

On two successive nights they slept in the boat with the luxury around them of the cool September air. "I have sailed down mighty rivers," wrote Shelley, in the preface to the "Revolt of Islam," "and seen the sun rise and set, and the stars come forth, whilst I have sailed night and day down a rapid stream among mountains." And Mrs. Shelley, recalling the beauty of hill and river between Mayence and Bonn, declares that memory, taking all the dark shades from the

picture, presented this part of the Rhine to her remembrance CHAP. X.  
 "as the loveliest paradise on earth." \*

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To escape the companionship of "the canaille," they decided to quit the Rhine route at Cologne, and advance by carriage or land diligence. "Get to Bonn," Jane enters in her journal, "where they intended us to sleep. We get a voiture and proceed to Cologne, much disgusted with all water diligences, or rather slownesses. We set out for Cologne at eight, and hoped to have reached it at ten; but our postilion was a German, and went only, with most excellent horses, two miles and a half an hour. We did not reach till one. We stayed knocking at the Mountain du Rhin half an hour. The postilion took everything quietly, and coolly rung gentle peals in the ears of the snoring ostler at the interval of every five minutes. No beds there; Shelley much provoked; proceed to another." On the following day seats were taken for Clèves in the lumbering diligence—"the most detestable of things," as it seemed to Mary, "being five times slower than a snail's walk; that is to say, rather more than a mile an hour."† Wearied and impatient, they posted the remainder of the way from Clèves, through sandy roads, between verdurous autumn fields, by endless canals, past endless lines of willow trees, past countless windmills, past neat Dutch houses and gardens bright with marigolds, over flying bridges, until Rotterdam was reached (September 8). Shelley, the purse-bearer, was now possessor of twenty crown pieces—coins too quick to disappear; but with the guineas the journeying was also almost at an end. "We reflected with wonder," Mary writes, "that we had travelled eight hundred miles for less than thirty pounds." Having arranged the terms of their passage to London with an English captain, and endured a tedious delay at Marsluys, while west winds blew, and the breakers tumbled on the bar—an interval of time used by Shelley to continue his romance, while Mary began her tale entitled "Hate," and Jane her

\* "Six Weeks' Tour."

† Journal, September 6.

HAP. X. "Idiot" (designed "to develop the workings and improve-  
uly-Sept. 1814. ments of a mind which by common people was deemed the  
mind of an idiot, because it conformed not to their vulgar and  
prejudiced views" \*)—at length they found themselves clear  
of sands, among tossing waves and sporting shoals of porpoises.  
After a night of restless discomfort, with the crash overhead  
of a breaking boom, came morning clear and calm, with the  
Suffolk coast in sight. "We remain on deck nearly the whole  
day," the journal records; "Mary recovers from her sickness;  
we dispute with one man upon the slave trade." On the  
following morning (September 13) the ship lay moored at  
Gravesend, and the trouble with custom-house officers over,  
Mary, Jane, and Shelley, who had with difficulty prevailed on  
the captain to trust them for the passage-money, were on their  
way up the Thames by boat to Blackwall, whence stage and  
hackney coach brought the returned wanderers back into the  
roar and rush of city streets.

\* Jane's journal. Nothing further is known of "Hate" or "The Idiot."

## CHAPTER XI.

## POVERTY IN LONDON.

THE months which passed between Shelley's return to Eng- CHAP. XI.  
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1814.  
land in September, 1814, and the death of his grandfather in January, 1815, were of a kind to blur, or else to brighten by contrast, the memory of those six weeks of free delight in the harvest-fields of France, in pine wood and mountain glen, on lake and rushing river, which had now come to a close. Never before or after were his miseries as a wealthy heir, harassed by debts and unable to meet the demands of eager creditors, so keen or so incessant. The cause lay in part in Shelley's temperament and habits. Though personally no lover of luxury or ostentation, he was ill fitted for holding tight the reins of domestic economy, month after month and year after year. He had never practised a hard and wholesome thrift, as did Wordsworth in his mountain cottage, or Carlyle in his lonely moorland home. Did he conceive a project, it must be realized on the instant, and money must be the willing slave of ideas. He had gratified Harriet in costly indulgences, to which, however his prospects may have seemed to warrant the extravagance, his present resources were wholly inadequate. To rescue Godwin from his ever-present, ever-increasing embarrassments, Shelley had used his utmost exertions in the early summer, and when November came—although the indignant father now refused to hold communications with him except through an attorney—he was at work endeavouring to meet a bill for

HAP. XI. two hundred pounds, which, he had been informed, would  
 ept.-Dec. come due on December 1, and which it was feared might cause  
 1814. bankruptcy to the little publishing house in Skinner Street.

And so in the October and dark November and December days much time and strength and vital spirits were consumed in miserable negotiations with lawyers, insurance agents, money-lenders; and if relief were obtained, it came with the prospect of twofold or treble future loss. "Shelley goes with Peacock to the lawyers', but, as usual, does not succeed" (October 18); "Shelley is out all the morning at the lawyers', but nothing is done" (October 22); "Shelley goes to Lambert's place, proposes a *post-obit* for Godwin's debt" (November 22); "After breakfast Shelley is as badly off as I am with my work, for he is out all day with those detested lawyers" (November 30); "Shelley out among the bad all morning" (December 2); "Shelley goes to Pike's, to the insurance offices, and the lawyers'; an agreement entered into for £3000 for £1000" (December 21). Such are some entries in the journal during these days of discomfort and anxiety, telling of weary hours in the city, which sent Shelley home at evening exhausted in body and mind—sometimes fit only to unburden himself of the load of fatigue in one of those slumbers resembling a deep lethargy which Hogg had observed with surprise long since during the winter evenings at Oxford.

With Godwin's household a half-surreptitious communication was kept up through Charles Clairmont, Jane's brother, a young man now in his twentieth year, who might assert some independence of action, and in a shy and furtive way through Fanny Godwin, whose affections were with Shelley and Mary, but whose sense of duty to Godwin restrained her from entering into direct relations with those who had offended him so deeply. Fanny's aunts, Everina Wollstonecraft and Mrs. Bishop, conducted with credit a school in Dublin; it was their intention that Fanny should succeed them as proprietress of the school; therefore her character and conduct must be clear

from all possible imputation of blame, and her associates must be above reproach. Mrs. Godwin, writing to Lady Mount-cashell—the pupil and friend of Mary Wollstonecraft—now in Italy, represented herself as not only robbed of her daughter Jane, but unable to communicate with her, and as ignorant for a time of the unhappy child's whereabouts. But here Mrs. Godwin, with her fine gift of mendacity, lied. Three days after his return from the Continent, Shelley wrote to Godwin, and received a letter—"very prejudiced," says Jane, in her journal—in reply; on September 16 Mrs. Godwin, accompanied by Fanny, paid a visit to the window of the lodgings of the returned wanderers (56, Margaret Street, Cavendish Square), but refused to speak to Shelley when he went out to her; in the month of November Jane Clairmont, on the occasion of an alleged illness of her mother, returned for a time to the house in Skinner Street.\* Thus a certain irregular communication was kept up between Godwin's household and that of Shelley, while Godwin himself remained indignant, and yet found it possible to accept important pecuniary favours from the man whose offence against virtue was past forgiveness. When recording in her journal her father's resolve to hold no intercourse with Shelley except through an attorney, Mary, in wonder at the strange inconsistencies of the vanity of virtue, might well utter her exclamation, "*Oh, philosophy!*"

Shelley's relations with Harriet, though at times they wore a friendly appearance, could hardly be sound or happy at heart. From the Continent he had written to her as though each of the now-divided pair might be sincerely regardful of the other's interests; and, if we may trust Miss Clairmont, he had sent from Calais or Paris, through Harriet, directions

\* It was represented to Shelley, Mary, and Jane that Mrs. Godwin was dying. Two days later she wrote to Lady Mountcashell, saying that she was at work from nine in the morning till nine at night, and complained of Jane's absence (not mentioning that Jane had gone to her on the 13th). On February 7, 1815, Mrs. Godwin relates how she has at last had an interview with her daughter in the Temple Gardens, by special permission extorted from Shelley, and how Jane has related to her the events of July to September of the preceding year.



CHAP. XI. to his bankers to honour her calls for money as far as his account permitted. On landing penniless from Rotterdam, Sept.-Dec. 1814. Shelley drove to his bankers', and ascertained that all his money had been drawn. Failing elsewhere to procure the means of paying for his passage and the smaller charges of waterman and coachman, he applied, says Miss Clairmont, to Harriet, and not without success, although to the twenty pounds which she handed to him were added the reproaches of an injured wife. On the next day and the next following, Shelley called upon Harriet, whose "strange behaviour" is noted in Jane's diary. On September 16 she sent him certain books which he desired to possess, with a "curious and weak letter," followed, at a brief interval, by another letter "mean and worldly" (the epithets are those of Jane's diary). It is evident that no true and wholesome understanding was possible, although Shelley may have desired to add nothing to the difficulties of the situation. As to Harriet, we can credit Mrs. Godwin's statement that she was not even yet convinced that her husband's heart had been finally alienated from her; "love affairs," she was told by every one, "last but a little time, and her husband will be sure to return to her." Such speeches, it was perceived by Mrs. Godwin, were cheering to Harriet, though she took it as cruel that one who had loved her long and tenderly should leave her for another at a time when she looked forward to the birth of a second child. "Letter from Harriet, very civil;" "Have a good-humoured letter from Harriet," are entries in Mary's journal for days of early October. The good-humoured letter had been written after a night of considerable anxiety, when Harriet had sent to inform Shelley of what she imagined to be a dangerous illness. Shelley lost no time in communicating with her, and in calling on her physician for trustworthy advice as to her state. Such concern manifested on her behalf was grateful to Harriet; yet it could hardly be hoped that any truce between the two could end in settled peace. Before a fortnight was

over came tidings—whether true or false we cannot tell—that CHAP. XI.  
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1814. Harriet had been at work to injure Godwin; he whose “Political Justice” had corrupted Percy’s heart, whose daughter Mary had determined to secure Percy (so Harriet phrased it) at every hazard, was the author of all her woes; and just now he was threatened with arrest; if only she could induce Hookham the bookseller to refuse to offer bail! “We talk over Harriet’s plan of ruining papa,” Jane enters in her journal on October 30. Nor by the close of the year had matters mended, when Harriet wrote, threatening Shelley with her lawyer (December 20). Much had been endured from creditors, attorneys, bailiffs, during the autumn, and lo! the wolves, white-toothed and gaunt, again in fell pursuit. By January 2, 1815, Mary’s patience had reached its limit, so grievous was this New Year’s gift of hungry creditors, and her vexation has its outbreak in the journal: “Harriet sends her creditors here; nasty woman. Now we must change our lodgings.”

At nine o’clock on the evening of November 30, 1814—a day on which Shelley had been for weary hours engaged with “those detested lawyers”—Harriet Shelley gave birth to an eight-months’ babe, a boy, very like his father, she afterwards declared. A week passed before Shelley was informed of the event, which is chronicled by Mary in her diary, with a bitter sense of Harriet’s claim to occupy a different position from her own, and perhaps some indignant scorn at her charge of desertion now advanced against Shelley. “*Tuesday, December 6.*—Very unwell. Shelley and Clara [*i.e.* Jane Clairmont\*] walk out, as usual, to heaps of places. . . . A letter from Hookham, to say that Harriet has been brought to bed of a son and heir. Shelley writes a number of circular letters of this event, which ought to be ushered in with ringing of bells, etc., for it is the son of his *wife*. A letter

\* It was apparently about this time that Jane Clairmont adopted the name *Clara*, *Clare*, or *Claire*, by which we shall henceforth know her. Her full name was Clara Mary Jane Clairmont.

CHAP. XI. from Harriet confirming the news, in a letter from a *deserted*  
 Sept.-Dec. *wife*!! and telling us he has been born a week." Next day  
 1814. Shelley called on Harriet, but the interview left husband and wife each embittered against the other. It was Harriet's complaint that Shelley viewed the new-born babe with mercenary eyes; the boy would "make money cheaper;" while Shelley, on his part, reported on his return that he had been met by insulting selfishness. "*Wednesday, December 7.*—Clara and Shelley go out together; Shelley calls on the lawyers, and on Harriet, who treats him with insulting selfishness; they return home wet and very tired." Charles Bysshe they named the babe; and it is in relation to him that the latest mention of Harriet occurs in Mary's journal. In April, 1815, Shelley being concerned in a Chancery case, promoted in order to determine certain doubtful questions respecting the family property, considered it expedient to produce his son in court. "Shelley passes the morning with Harriet, who is in a surprisingly good humour," writes Mary in her journal of April 10; and some days later (April 21): "Shelley goes to Harriet to procure his son, who is to appear in one of the Courts;" (April 22) "Shelley goes to Harriet about his son. Work. Fanny comes: talk. Shelley returns at four; he has been much teased with Harriet." Unhappily, the journal from mid-May, 1815, to July of the following year, has been lost, and from that date onwards no reference to Harriet Shelley occurs, until the day on which a letter from Hookham brought Shelley, when at Bath, piteous tidings of her death.

Solitude, unharassed by debts and duns, with Mary's companionship, the society of a few friends, and the delights of study and of authorship, would have made these winter months to Shelley months of unusual happiness and calm. But friends had fallen away; Godwin was incensed, not without just cause; when Mrs. Boinville wrote, her letter seemed "cold and even sarcastic;" and the Newtons were

either absent or held aloof.\* Peacock, indeed, was friendly CHAP. XI.  
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1814. and helpful, and his friendship and help were grateful in this season of cold and dearth. And after a time Hogg, whose first response to a letter from Shelley (October 17) had been far from sympathetic, renewed his intimacy somewhat on the old Oxford footing. We smile as we observe how the genial cynic, the worldling and the wit, yet with genuine admiration for an ideal of character remote from his own, at once repelled and attracted Shelley and Mary, and how by degrees the attraction proved the stronger force. "I saw Hogg last night," Shelley wrote, early in November; "I am disappointed in him, though my expectations were very moderate." A few evenings later (November 14) Hogg called for the first time at his friend's lodgings in Nelson Square. Shelley is now the diarist: "Mary is unwell. Receive a note from Hogg. . . . In the evening Hogg calls; perhaps he still may be my friend, in spite of the radical differences of sympathy between us; he was pleased with Mary; this was the test by which I had previously determined to judge his character. We converse on many interesting subjects, and Mary's illness disappears for a time." If Mary returned Hogg's liking, it was at first with grave reserves. When he jested, he was amusing; but when he discussed serious matters, his opinions were far astray.

"*Sunday, November 20.*—Still very ill; get up very late. In the evening Shelley reads aloud out of the *Female Revolutionary Plutarch*. Hogg comes in the evening; gives us a laughable account of Dr. Lamb and Mrs. Newton. Get into an argument about virtue, in which Hogg makes a sad bungle—quite muddled on the point, I perceive.

\* The Newtons, I believe, went in 1814 into Hampshire, where Mrs. Newton soon afterwards died. Of the Turners Shelley saw a little. "What does Alfred [Mrs. Turner's brother] think of this?" Shelley asked, referring to his flight with Mary. *Mrs. Turner*. "That you've been playing a German tragedy." *Shelley*. "Very severe, but very true." This anecdote Mr. Constable recorded in an unpublished letter written after an interview with Mrs. Turner in 1872. The "German tragedy" perhaps is an allusion to Goethe's "Stella."

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"*Sunday, November 27.*—Read 'The Italian,' and talk all day—a very happy day indeed. Hogg comes in the evening; he is sadly perverted, and I begin to lose hopes; his opinion of honour and respect for established customs condemn him in the courts of philosophy.

"*Tuesday, November 29.*—Work all day. Shelley reads the 'Fairly Queen' aloud. He goes to Parker's with Clara. In the evening Hogg comes. We have an argument upon the Love of Wisdom, and Free-Will and Necessity; he quite wrong, but quite puzzled; his arguments are very weak.

"*Thursday, December 1.*— . . . Hogg comes. . . . Talk about heaps of things, but do not argue to-night.

"*Sunday, December 4.*— . . . Hogg comes in the evening. I like him better to-night than before, but still I fear he is *un enfant perdu*."

"*Tuesday, December 6.*— . . . Hogg comes in the evening. I like him better, though he vexed me by his attachment to sporting.

"*Thursday, December 8.*— . . . In the evening Hogg comes; talk about a number of things. He is more sincere this evening than I have seen him before.

"*Wednesday, December 14.*— . . . Very weak and unwell. In the evening read Milton's 'Letter on Education.' Hogg comes; no argument, and not an interesting conversation; but he gives a funny account of Shelley's father, particularly of his vision and the matrimonial morning;\* conversation annexed thereunto.

"*Thursday, December 22* [Shelley is here the diarist].—Mary wakes early. Delightful talk. . . . In the evening Hogg comes. He describes an apparition of a lady, whom he had loved, appearing to him after her death; she came in the twilight summer night, and was hardly visible; she touched his cheek with her hands and visited him many successive nights; he was always unaware of her approach,

\* I cannot explain the reference here.

and passed many waking hours in expectation of it. Interest-  
 ing conversation interrupted by Clara's childish superstition. CHAP. XI.  
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 Hogg departs at twelve.

"*Saturday, December 24* [Mary writing].—In the evening Hogg comes. I like him better each time; it is a pity that he is a lawyer—he wasted so much time on that trash that he might spend on better things."

So the old friendship with Hogg renewed itself, with jest and anecdote and argument, as in the old days of University College; and New Year's Day brought a note and present from the friendly cynic to Mary; and by-and-by Jefferson (Hogg's familiar Christian name now appearing in the journal) would accompany Clara and "the Maie" (Shelley's pet name for Mary) to the bonnet-shop; or, indoors, would read "Rokeby" aloud for them; or would listen while Mary—now a student of Latin—construed her lesson from Ovid. For a time, in the spring of 1815, Hogg lodged under the same roof with Shelley, Mary, and Clara Clairmont.

Jane, or Clara as she now chose to be called (a form of the name afterwards altered to "Clare" or "Claire"), with brilliant talents and some generous instincts, was yet hardly framed to be herself happy or to make happy those with whom her lot was cast. Nervous, excitable, with a changeful temper, and a capacity for brooding resentment, she already found at times that life went hard with her. Mrs. Godwin desired her daughter's return to Skinner Street; but Skinner Street, after the weeks of wandering on lake and river, had a narrow and saddened air, and, partly influenced by Shelley's advice, Clara was not inclined to yield submission to a mother who, though wife to Godwin, was not a philosopher or, indeed, moderately enlightened. Moreover, Everina Wollstonecraft and Mrs. Bishop opposed her return on the ground that their niece and *protégée*, Fanny, might suffer in character or repute from companionship with one who had broken the bounds and fled her home under circumstances injurious to name

CHAP. XI. and fame. There was even a strange report, brought by her brother Charles, three days after the wanderers' return to London, to the effect that the Skinner Street authorities had decided upon immuring Clara in a convent. Evidently her return to Godwin's house would be equivalent to the closing of prison doors. Yet it became now and again apparent that, where she was, her presence was not desired—not desired certainly by Mary, and that through Mary it might be to Shelley also a source of discomfort. At first, indeed, all went well. Although during the Continental tour it was a delight to Mary to possess an hour of perfect solitude with Shelley, the three young English folk, surrounded by strangers, for the most part held well together. And for a while after their return to London they were closely bound one to another by mutual service and common pursuits and pleasures. Shelley's feeling towards Mary was the ideal lover's feeling to one above himself—she was forming and educating him. "I believe I must become in Mary's hands," he wrote to her, "what Harriet was in mine. Yet how differently disposed—how devoted and affectionate—how beyond measure reverencing and adoring the intelligence that governs me!" Towards Clara, with her unformed character and wayward temper, he felt as a superior, whose happy task it was to guide her understanding and deliver her from the tangle of custom and prejudice and error; for Shelley still was pleased to perform the part of a pioneer for tender feminine feet, alert to follow him away from the well-trodden paths of use and wont. All three were eager for knowledge, indefatigable readers for profit or for pleasure, and under Shelley's instruction both girls were soon zealously at work upon Latin translation and the Greek grammar. "Mary receives her first lesson in Greek," is noted in the journal a few days after they had settled in their Margaret Street lodgings. "Mary reads Greek and 'Rasselas,'" "Study Greek," "Read two odes of Anacreon before breakfast," are entries of Mary on days

of September; while Clara is learning "four tenses of the CHAP. XI. verb *to strike*," and, having mastered the Greek characters, Sept.-Dec. 1814. is able to dignify her diary with a mention of *εἶμι*’.

The students of Greek were also students of philosophy, and gave their mornings, sometimes together, sometimes singly, to Godwin's "Political Justice;" for the indignant father was still, through his writings, a philosophic guide to Shelley. With deep and peculiar affection Mary cherished her mother's memory, read and read again her mother's books; and when she would peruse Godwin's "Essay on Sepulchres," made the little volume her companion as she sat now once more by the pillared tomb of Mary Wollstonecraft in old St. Pancras churchyard. When the sense grew upon her that an unborn life was bound up with her own, Mary became less frequently Shelley's companion in his weary walks to the lawyers', insurance-agents', and money-lenders' offices, and Clara took her place; Shelley did not choose to be alone, and, if we may trust Miss Clairmont's account given in later years, was haunted by an apprehension of sudden attack from Leeson, the supposed assassin of Tanyrallt, which he believed that the presence of a companion and witness by his side would avert.\* Sometimes, after these dull fatigues of business, Shelley would return with some new volume of poetry, and a delightful hour, during which he or Mary read aloud, would efface the perplexities and sordid cares of the day. In 1814 was published Wordsworth's great poetical quarto "The Excursion," and Shelley had scarcely set foot in England before he must make this treasure his own; but the "Excursion," weighty with its author's maturer wisdom, was little to the liking of young revolutionary spirits. "Shelley calls on Hookham," Mary's journal records, "and brings home Wordsworth's 'Excursion,' of which we read a part; much disappointed. He is a slave." For Southey, the favourite of

\* Miss Clairmont adds that this delusion did not pass away until either the latter part of 1818 or the beginning of 1819 [an error for 1820], when Shelley was at Pisa.



CHAP. XI. his boyhood, Shelley had not yet lost his regard, and the wild and wondrous tale of "Thalaba" was read aloud evening after evening to two well-pleased listeners. An early poem of Shelley's, addressed in thought though not by name to Coleridge, contrasts the visionary lights irradiating Coleridge's verse with the dull despondency which brooded upon his spirit.\* Dear to Shelley's imagination were those visionary lights, and he loved to read aloud or to repeat from memory poems—the "Ancient Mariner," "Tranquillity," the "Ode to France"—which had been springs of wonder and rapture to himself. Or the fireside hour of enjoyment was given to Byron. "We read," Shelley enters in the diary (February 15, 1815), "and are delighted with 'Lara,' the finest of Lord Byron's poems. Shelley reads 'Lara' aloud in the evening." Or he would leave the present for the past, and lose himself in the enchanted region of Spenser's "Faerie Queene," or listen to the moral pleadings of the lady captive in Comus's magic chair; or he would try his spirit and those of his hearers with the severer beauty of the "Paradise Regained." Or it might be that poetry gave place to prose—that of some elder writer, as Browne's remote and lofty meditation in the "Religio Medici;" or, perhaps, Gibbon's incomparable Memoir; or, opulent in pseudo-passion and the coarsely marvellous, Lewis's romance of "The Monk;" or the Abbé Barruel's strange history of Illuminati and secret arch-conspirators; or Godwin's novels, with their stronger texture of logic supporting the plot interest; or the tales of Godwin's American disciple in romance, Charles Brockden Brown. "Brown's four novels," says Peacock, "Schiller's 'Robbers,' and Goethe's 'Faust,' were, of all the works with which he was familiar, those which took the deepest root in Shelley's mind, and had the strongest influence in the formation of his character."

\* I have often questioned whether the poem beginning "Oh, there are spirits in the air," has reference (as Mrs. Shelley declares it has) to Coleridge, or whether it was not rather addressed in a despondent mood by Shelley to his own spirit.

But if Brown's four best novels—"Wieland," "Ormond," CHAP. XI. "Edgar Huntly," and "Arthur Mervyn"—delighted and Sept.-Dec. deeply affected Shelley, it was not so with his "Jane Talbot," 1814. on which Mary's criticism in the journal has a pleasant touch of the uncompromising spirit of youth. "Read 'Jane Talbot,' very stupid book; some letters so-so; but the old woman in it is so abominable, the young woman so weak, and the young man (the only sensible one in the whole) the author of course contrives to bring to idiocy at the end." With Wieland's "Agathon" Shelley had made acquaintance in the Boinville circle, where, according to Hogg, it was, in its French adaptation, the leading classic. "Agathon," the romance of its author's maturity, when reality and the senses had sapped in upon the idealism of his youth, awakens in Mary the liveliest resentment. "[December 8.] Finish 'Agathon;' I do not like it. Wieland displays some most detestable opinions; he is one of those men who alter all their opinions when they are about forty, and then think it will be the same with every one, and that they are themselves the only proper monitors of youth." During the early months of their union Mary's reading and Shelley's went on in the main side by side; a few Latin authors, with a volume or two of travels, were alone unshared by Mary; but gradually—while much remained for them as a common possession—their studies diverged. Both could speed on wings through an author that interested them; both could plod at a slower pace when this was desirable. Twelve hundred pages which Shelley sets down as the amount of his reading during seventeen days of January and February, 1815, was no immoderate dose, though many of the pages were in Latin. Clara, a little later, presented him with a copy of Seneca, and Mary's entry in the journal is—"Shelley reads Seneca;" "Shelley reads Seneca every day and all day."

But the days were not wholly wasted in negotiations respecting debts and loans, nor were the evenings always

CHAP. XI. devoted to study. The walks were not invariably "to Sept.—Dec. 1814. Tahourdin's and other lawyers' holes;" sometimes the young feet stepped gladly towards free fields or heath under an open heaven. And the town had its bright allurements, and quick dance of colours, lights, and forms. There was Exeter 'Change to visit, with its wild beasts, notable among them "the live serpent," "a most curious monkey, a very pretty antelope, a cassowary and two land tortoises," besides the "very fine panther, who plays with a cannon ball," and the hyena, "very frisky, running after its tail." There were flowers to buy in Covent Garden Market, as the spring began to open—flowers which Mary was skilful to arrange so as to bring a touch of outdoor life and grace into London lodgings. There were Lucien Bonaparte's pictures to be seen, with the beautiful "Magdalen" by Greuze, and Carlo Dolci's "Four Evangelists;" and in Newman Street there was the statue of Theoclea—"a divinity," exclaims Mary, "that raises your mind to all virtue and excellence; I never beheld anything half so wonderfully beautiful."

In the evening, if Shelley were not reading aloud, or playing chess with Mary, or Clara, or Hogg, he might be engaged on one of his pieces of delicate untutored drawing, in which trees and fantastic rocks grew under his pen; or the time would pass in chemical experiments; or he would be off and away to hear "Garnerin's lecture on electricity, the gases, and the phantasmagoria;" or on some rare occasion, accompanied by Mary and Clara, he would sit a spectator in the theatre. Shelley had a prejudice against theatres, Peacock tells us, and he often talked of the "withering and perverting spirit of comedy." His keen sense of pity caused him to feel that the grotesque in humanity is too often the result of human suffering, of the distortions of mental pain, or the stunted growth of mental starvation. "Society grinds down poor wretches into the dust of abject poverty," he said, "till they are scarcely recognizable as human beings; and then, instead

of being treated as what they really are, subjects of the CHAP. XI.  
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1814. deepest pity, they are brought forward as grotesque monstrosities to be laughed at.\* But if comedy offended Shelley, neither did tragedy as represented on the stage satisfy his imagination or commend itself to his moral sense. "With the exception of [Milman's] 'Fazio,'" says Peacock, "I do not remember his having been pleased with any performance at an English theatre." In 1814 Edmund Kean, appearing for the first time on the boards of Drury Lane, took the town by storm. It will be remembered how deep and ardent was Keats's delight in the Shakesperian impersonations of that extraordinary actor. On October 13, 1814, some sudden alarm, possibly in connection with creditors, determined Shelley, with Mary and Clara, to quit London instantly, and from Hookham was procured the sum of five pounds to take them on their way. As suddenly as the resolution was formed it was altered, and the respited fugitives, deeming it sufficient precaution to move from their lodgings to a hotel, decided to pass the evening in one of the boxes at Drury Lane Theatre. That evening Kean appeared in "Hamlet;" but when the curtain fell on the second act, Shelley could endure no more and left the house. His feelings, no doubt, are truly interpreted by the entry in Mary's diary: "Go to the play. The extreme depravity and disgusting nature of the scene; the inefficacy of acting to encourage or maintain the delusion. The loathsome sight of men personating characters which do not and cannot belong to them. Shelley displeased with what he saw of Kean." †

Shelley's walks, when not determined elsewhere, often tended in the direction of a pond at no great distance from Primrose Hill, very proper for the delectable amusement of sailing paper boats; or in that of the Serpentine or the Surrey

\* Peacock, "Memoirs of Shelley," part i.

† Afterwards Shelley thought better of Kean's acting, and wished that he might play the part of Count Cenci.

CHAP. XI. Canal, where the same pleasure could be pursued with a more daring spirit of adventure. In his poetry Shelley often delightfully imagines some frail bark, instinct, as it were, with spirit, and self-moved, or borne forward by the pressure of some mighty wind. Doubtless, while he watched it speeding from the bank and piloted by wandering airs, his pretty paper toy became for him a thing of joy and wonder, like Mab's pearly car, or the little shallop which bore his lonely dreamer seawards from the Chorasman shore. If fire were a joint minister of his will with winds and water, Shelley's ecstasy touched a rarer point; and that must indeed have been a fortunate day (October 3) on which he and Peacock, having in the morning "set off little fire-boats" on the Primrose Hill pond, after dinner made the darkness illustrious with fireworks. Shelley's happiness in this pastime of sailing paper boats had in it something vital and deep-seated, for it outlasted some passions that looked more serious. Peacock, indeed, was inclined to claim the credit of having initiated Shelley in this art of navigation; but, uninstructed by Peacock, he had sailed his rude boat of wood on the wild Welsh stream at Nantgwillt, and had pushed seawards his flotilla of dark-green bottles and white-winged boxes, each laden with its freight of light and liberty, from the Lynmouth rocks. Sometimes before he started on his walk a tiny fleet would have been constructed by Mary's fingers; sometimes by edge of pond or river Shelley would himself enact the naval architect. "He twisted a morsel of paper," says Hogg, "into a form that a lively fancy might consider a likeness of a boat, and committing it to the water, he anxiously watched the frail bark, which, if it was not soon swamped by the faint winds and miniature waves, gradually imbibed water through its porous sides, and sank. Sometimes, however, the fairy vessel performed its little voyage, and reached the opposite shore of the puny ocean in safety. It is astonishing with what keen delight he engaged in this singular pursuit. It was not easy for an uninitiated

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spectator to bear with tolerable patience the vast delay, on CHAP. XI.  
the brink of a wretched pond upon a bleak common, and in Sept.-Dec.  
the face of a cutting north-east wind, on returning to dinner 1814.  
from a long walk at sunset on a cold winter's day; nor was  
it easy to be so harsh as to interfere with a harmless gratifi-  
cation, that was evidently exquisite. . . . So long as his paper  
lasted, he remained riveted to the spot, fascinated by this  
peculiar amusement; all waste paper was rapidly consumed,  
then the covers of letters, next letters of little value; the most  
precious contributions of the most esteemed correspondent,  
although eyed wistfully many times, and often returned to  
the pocket, were sure to be sent at last in pursuit of the  
former squadrons. Of the portable volumes which were the  
companions of his rambles—and he seldom went without a  
book—the fly-leaves were commonly wanting; he had applied  
them as our ancestor Noah applied gopher-wood. But learning  
was so sacred in his eyes, that he never trespassed further  
upon the integrity of the copy; the work itself was always  
respected.” \* The best spot he ever found for this amusement,  
says Peacock, was “a large pool of transparent water, on a  
heath above Bracknell, with determined borders free from  
weeds, which admitted of launching the miniature craft on the  
windward, and running round to receive it on the leeward  
side. On the Serpentine, he would sometimes launch a boat  
constructed with more than usual care and freighted with  
halfpence. He delighted to do this in the presence of boys,  
who would run round to meet it, and when it landed in safety  
and the boys scrambled for their prize, he had difficulty in  
restraining himself from shouting as loudly as they did.” †  
The tale that on one occasion, having no other scrap of paper  
in his possession, Shelley launched on the Serpentine a bank-  
post bill for fifty pounds, is admitted by its narrator, Hogg, to  
be a mythic fable.

\* Hogg's “Life of Shelley,” vol. i. pp. 83, 84.

† “Memoirs of Shelley,” part ii.

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In all these diversions and cares and studies Clara Clairmont had a part. Shelley's glancing, olive-cheeked companion became a familiar figure in the dingy "lawyers' holes" before 1814 had closed; side by side with Mary she sat over her Greek exercise; she assisted in sailing boats on the pond past Primrose Hill; and when it was planned that Shelley's sisters, Elizabeth and Hellen, "two heiresses," should be converted and liberated, and borne away to the West of Ireland, or when the happier design suggested itself of a subterranean association of philosophical people, Clara entered with alacrity and spirit into these adventurous projects or freaks of fancy.\* But there were times when everything seemed to go wrong, when Mary seemed harsh, when even Shelley seemed unkind; and then Clara would wander away alone, or retreat to her bedroom, or sit silent for the day, suffering from her own wrathful feelings, until soothing explanatory words were spoken, and the moody fit rolled off. "Charles Clairmont comes in the evening," Shelley enters in the journal of December 19; "a discussion concerning female character. Clara imagines that I treat her unkindly. Mary consoles her with her all-powerful benevolence. I rise (having already gone to bed) and speak with Clara; she was very unhappy; I leave her tranquil." And Mary, writing on November 26, "Work in the evening. Shelley reads 'Rights of Man.' Clara in an ill humour. She reads 'The Italian.' Shelley sits up and talks her into reason." "November 9: Jane gloomy; she is very sullen with Shelley. Well, never mind, my love; we are happy." "November 10:

\* The entries in Mary's diary about the "running away scheme," which seems to have been seriously thought of, are worth extracting. "*Friday, September 30.*—After breakfast walk to Hampstead Heath. Discuss the possibility of converting and liberating two heiresses; arrange a plan on this subject. . . . Peacock calls; talk with him concerning the heiresses and Marian; arrange his marriage. ['Peacock likes our plan,' *Claire's diary*.] *Saturday, October 1.*—M. H. (?) and Mary call at Mrs. Hugford's; see Eliza, Helen, and Anne. Peacock dines with us. Talk in the evening of our running away scheme. [*Sunday, October 2.*—'Talk over our plan the whole day,' *Claire's diary*.] *Monday, October 3.*—After dinner talk and let off fireworks. Talk of the west of Ireland plan." *Claire's diary* makes it certain that the "two heiresses" were Shelley's sisters.

Jane is not well, and does not speak the whole day. . . . Go to bed early. Shelley and Jane sit up till twelve, talking. Shelley talks her into a good humour." "Shelley explains with Clara," "Shelley and Clara explain, as usual," are entries which signify that a misunderstanding was over and gone, and Clara, for her part, the chief sufferer from her own humours, makes piteous penitent resolutions in her diary, and tells how she hates her own bitterness, and likes "good, kind, explaining people." "Mary says things which I construe into unkindness. I was wrong. We soon become friends, but I felt deeply the imaginary cruelties I conjured up" (October 19).

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It was not only imaginary cruelties that Clara's fancy could conjure up; she suffered also from paroxysms of imaginary fear, and horrors of the supernatural, which Shelley sometimes regarded with sympathetic interest and half-belief; sometimes with amused scepticism; while by Mary, with her calmer temper and maturer judgment, they were viewed with something like disdain. At Lucerne, the reading aloud of "King Lear" had been suddenly stopped by "Jane's horrors," and, later, the conversation which followed Hogg's interesting narrative of the apparition of his dead beloved (told perhaps not without a momentary twinkle of his eye) was interrupted, much to Shelley's vexation, by "Clara's childish superstition." The usual reading aloud or game of chess being ended, Shelley, according to his wont, would sink into a deep and delightful slumber, from which if he were roused the pain was like that of one returning to life from the drowning trance. "Cannon the most miserable wretch alive," writes Shelley in the journal, with an outbreak of self-amused savagery against the destroyer of his blissful dreams: "*Καταρίπτει ὕπνον εὐδαιμονέστατον*. He stays the evening, vulgar brute; it is disgusting to hear such a beast speak of philosophy, etc. Let refinement and benevolence convey these ideas." The like happy gift for slumber was possessed by Clara. By the hour of their awaking, Mary, now careful for another life bound up with



CHAP. XI. her own, had retired to rest, and with "The Monk," or "Zastrozzi," or the Abbé Barruel for companion, the silence of midnight would sometimes begin to tingle for Clara's ears, and supernatural wonders would thicken the air. "I go to bed soon," writes Mary in the journal (October 18), "but Shelley and Jane sit up, and for a wonder do not frighten themselves." Scientific students of the marvellous desire to obtain the evidence of at least two witnesses, and therefore it is well to present both Shelley's and Clara's reports of the strange incidents of the night of Friday, October 7, 1814.\*

[Shelley's journal.] "Read 'Political Justice.' Peacock calls. Jane for some reason refuses to walk. We traverse the fields towards Hampstead. Under an expansive oak lies a dead calf; the cow, lean from grief, is watching it (contem-plate subject for poem). The sunset is beautiful. Return at nine. Peacock departs. Mary goes to bed at half-past eight; Shelley sits up with Jane. Talk of oppression and reform, of cutting squares of skin from the soldiers' backs. Jane states her conception of the subterranean community of women.† Talk of Hogg, Harriet, Miss Hitchener, etc. At one o'clock Shelley observes that it is the witching time of night; he inquires soon after if it is not horrible to feel the silence of night tingling in our ears; in half an hour the question is repeated in a different form; at two they retire awe-struck, and hardly daring to breathe. Shelley says to Jane, 'Good night;' his hand is leaning on the table; he is conscious of an expression in his countenance which he cannot repress. Jane hesitates. 'Good night' again. She still hesitates.

"'Did you ever read the tragedy of "Orra ‡"?' said Shelley. 'Yes.' 'How horribly you look!—take your eyes off.' 'Good night' again, and Jane ran to her room. Shelley, unable to

\* It is noted by Mary that Shelley, on October 6, was very unwell.

† This is the correct reading of the words of the journal; not "Jane states her conception of the sublime—community of women."

‡ Joanna Baillie's tragedy, the heroine of which goes mad through terror of unearthly fears.

sleep, kissed Mary, and prepared to sit beside her, and read CHAP. XI. until morning, when rapid footsteps descended the stairs. Sept.—Dec. 1814. Jane was there; her countenance was distorted most unnaturally by horrible dismay—it beamed with a whiteness that seemed almost like light; her lips and cheeks were of one deadly hue; the skin of her face and forehead was drawn into innumerable wrinkles—the lineaments of terror that could not be contained; her hair came prominent and erect; her eyes were wide and staring, drawn almost from the sockets by the convulsion of the muscles; the eyelids were forced in, and the eyeballs, without any relief, seemed as if they had been newly inserted in ghastly sport in the sockets of a lifeless head. This frightful spectacle endured but for a few moments; it was displaced by terror and confusion, violent indeed and full of dismay, but human. She asked me (Shelley) if I had touched her pillow (her tone was that of dreadful alarm). I said, ‘No, no! if you come into the room I will tell you.’ I informed her of Mary’s pregnancy; this seemed to check her violence. She told me that a pillow placed upon her bed had been removed, in the moment that she turned her eyes away, to a chair at some distance, and evidently by no human power. She was positive as to the fact of her self-possession and calmness. Her manner convinced me that she was not deceived. We continued to sit by the fire, at intervals engaged in awful conversation relative to the nature of these mysteries. I read part of ‘Alexy’ [Hogg’s novel ‘Alexy Haimatoff’]; I repeated one of my own poems. Our conversation, though intentionally directed to other topics, irresistibly recurred to these. Our candles burned low, we feared they would not last until daylight. Just as the dawn was struggling with moonlight, Jane remarked in me that unutterable expression which had affected her with so much horror before; she described it as expressing a mixture of deep sadness and conscious power over her. I covered my face with my hands, and spoke to her in the most studied gentleness. It was ineffectual; her horror and agony

CHAP. XI. increased even to the most dreadful convulsions. She shrieked and writhed on the floor. I ran to Mary. I communicated in few words the state of Jane. I brought her to Mary. The convulsions gradually ceased, and she slept. At daybreak we examined her apartment and found her pillow on the chair."

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[Clara's journal.] "Peacock at breakfast. Read 'Political Justice.' Shelley, Mary, and Peacock walk out in the fields. I go by myself in the squares. Dine at six. Peacock goes at eight. Mary goes to bed. Shelley and myself sit over the fire. We talk of making an association of philosophical people—of Eliza and Helen, of Hogg and Harriet. At one the conversation turned upon those unaccountable and mysterious feelings about supernatural things that we are sometimes subject to. Shelley looks beyond all passing strange—a look of impressive, deep, and melancholy awe. I cannot describe it; I well know how I felt it. I ran upstairs to bed. I placed the candle on the drawers and stood looking at a pillow that lay in the very middle of the bed. I turned my head round to the window and then back again to the bed; the pillow was no longer there; it had been removed to the chair. I stood thinking for two moments—how did this come? was it possible that I had deluded myself so far as to place it there myself and then forgot the action? This was not likely. Every[thing] passed, as it were, in a moment. I ran downstairs. Shelley heard me, and came out of his room. He gives the most horrible description of my countenance. I did not feel in the way he thinks I did. We sat up all night. I was ill. At daybreak we examined the room, and found everything in the state I described."

On the Friday or Saturday of the following week the bewitched pillow was at its pranks again, but Shelley could now smile at them. Clara was in one of her unhappy moods. Certain reflections suggested themselves to Shelley which it was indeed wise that he should lay to heart.

"*Friday, October 14* [Shelley's journal].—Jane's insensibility

and incapacity for the slightest degree of friendship. The feelings occasioned by this discovery prevent me (Shelley) from maintaining any measure in security. This highly incorrect; subversion of the first principles of true philosophy; characters, particularly those which are unformed, may change. Beware of weakly giving way to trivial sympathies. Content yourself with one great affection—with a single mighty hope; let the rest of mankind be the subjects of your benevolence, your justice, and, as human beings, of your sensibility; but, as you value many hours of peace, never suffer more than one even to approach the hallowed circle. Nothing should shake the truly great spirit which is not sufficiently mighty to destroy it.

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“Peacock calls. I take some interest in this man, but no possible conduct of his would disturb my tranquillity. Hear that Eliza and Hellen go to Norfolk in three weeks. Converse with Jane; her mind unsettled; her character unformed; occasion of hope from some instance of softness and feeling; she is not entirely insensible to concessions; new proofs that the most exalted philosophy, the truest virtue, consists in an habitual contempt of self; a subduing of all angry feelings; a sacrifice of pride and selfishness. When you attempt benefit to either an individual or a community, abstain from imputing it as an error that they despise or overlook your virtue.

“These are incidental reflections which arise only indirectly from the circumstances recorded. Walk with Peacock to the pond; talk of Marian and Greek metre; Peacock dines. In the evening read Cicero and the ‘Paradoxa.’ Night comes. Jane walks in her sleep and groans horribly; listen for two hours; at length bring her to Mary. Begin ‘Julius’ and finish the little volume of Cicero. The next morning the chimney-board in Jane’s room is found to have walked leisurely into the middle of the room, accompanied by the pillow, who, being very sleepy, tried to get into bed again, but fell down on his back.”

CHAP. XI. Wrought upon by Shelley's amiability, all that was amiable in Clara could reassert itself.  
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[Clara's diary for the same day.] "Get up late: go down in a very ill humour: quarrel with Shelley. But to know one's faults is to mend them; perhaps this morning, though productive of very painful feelings, has in reality been of more essential benefit to me than any I ever yet passed. How hateful it is to quarrel—to say a thousand unkind things meaning none, things produced by the bitterness of disappointment! Walk home through the Regent's Park. Leave them, and go home by myself. Peacock calls; laughs at us. Good news of Eliza. Shelley comes into my room and thinks he was to blame, but I don't. How I like good, kind, explaining people! S[helley] and P[eacock] go to the pond. Walk out a little by myself. Peacock goes after tea. Read St. Leon. Go to bed at nine; about half after ten Shelley comes up, and I go down and sleep with Mary because I groan. Go to sleep at half-past two." \*

These days, so teased and tangled with cares and anxieties respecting debts, and loans, and the sale of reversions, and annuities, and post-obit bonds, were little favourable to authorship. Some effort was made by Shelley (October 19) to continue his romance of "The Assassins," begun in Switzerland, and the portion already written was read aloud for the publisher, Hookham; but circumstances continued unpropitious for a high imaginative enterprise. Shelley's zeal relaxed, and "The Assassins" remains a fragment. This, as far as we can ascertain, was the sole production of the second half of the year 1814, if we except an article commending and criticizing Hogg's imaginary "Memoirs of Prince Alexy Haimatoff," which Shelley contributed to the *Critical Review* for December. His friend's philosophic-fantastic tale, neglected on its appearance

\* On November 14, when Clara apparently wavered between staying with Shelley and Mary and returning to Godwin's house, Shelley again comments on her character: "I wish this girl had a resolute mind. Without firmness understanding is impotent, and the truest principles unintelligible."

and now buried ten fathoms deep in the waters of oblivion, CHAP. XI. appeared to its too-generous reviewer to be a work almost Sept.—Dec. 1814. unsurpassed for boldness of thought and delicacy of imagination. Yet he indicates in no undecided way what seemed to him to be its errors of opinion and imperfections of style. Perhaps the most striking passage in Shelley's review is that in which he rises, with all the ardour of one who knows the sanctity of love, to utter his reprobation and horror of the merchandise of sensual pleasures.\* Through the pain and through the new and exquisite joy of 1814 Shelley's heart and intellect were maturing, but the fruit and flowers could not ripen until a season of more steadfast sunshine came. That he felt bitterly, during these days of heart-wasting anxieties about money, how his higher self was depressed and almost borne under by the throng of meaner cares, cannot be doubted. "One day," writes Peacock, "as we were walking together on the banks of the Surrey Canal, and discoursing of Wordsworth and quoting some of his verses, Shelley suddenly said to me, 'Do you think Wordsworth could have written such poetry if he ever had dealings with money-lenders?'" The plain, veracious dalesman in Wordsworth, indeed, afforded the ideal poet a sure and steadfast support in climbing to the heights; while Shelley, though with his intellect he could apply himself to business and master its details, lacked the endurance and resilience of will needed for success in practical life—

"Exilé sur le sol au milieu des huées,  
Ses ailes de géant l'empêchent de marcher."

"You know," he wrote to Godwin in 1816, "my habitual, my constitutional inability to deal with monied men;" not that he was unable to comprehend their views, but that his staying

\* It was my good fortune to discover and identify as Shelley's this review. By the kindness of Mrs. Lousdale—Mr. Hogg's daughter—I was enabled to give an account of "The Memoirs of Prince Alexy Haimatoff," a book of considerable rarity. See the article, "Some Early Writings of Shelley," *Contemporary Review*, 1884.

CHAP. XI. power was exhausted before theirs, and at last, after strenuous  
 Sept.-Dec. resistance, he fell a prey into their hands.  
 1814.

Some passages of the life of Shelley and Mary in the autumn and winter of 1814 lived with peculiar vividness in Mary's memory, and were transferred in later years, with altered names and certain imaginative alteration of circumstances, to the pages of her novel, "Lodore." Though veiled and adapted to the purposes of fiction, the narrative of the troubles which beset the early wedded life of Edward and Ethel Villiers is a genuine piece of autobiography. Scarcely have they laid hand in hand and heart to heart, than their perfect happiness each in the other is assailed and tested by cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches. To obtain the means of meeting the demands of importunate creditors, and to hide himself from their pursuit, Edward Villiers has to bid his bride farewell, and to bury his head in London lodgings. "A first parting," writes Mrs. Shelley, "is a kind of landmark in life—a starting-post whence we begin our career out of illusion and the land of dreams, into reality and endurance." By occupation Ethel Villiers tries to shorten her hours of solitude. "It was difficult; for all her thoughts were employed in conjectures as to where Edward was, what he was doing . . . or in meditating how hereafter she might remedy any remissness on her part, and best contribute to his happiness. . . . Each day she heard from him; each day she wrote, and this entire pouring-out of herself on paper formed the charm of her existence." "I have just come from my solicitor," Edward wrote, "and have but time to say that I must go there again to-morrow, so I shall not be with you. Oh, the heavy hours in this dark prison! You will reward me and make me forget them when I see you; but how shall I pass the time till then!" Absence at length is found to be unendurable, and Ethel drives through labyrinthine London in a dark November fog. They are united, and their joy is entire and pure. "Life and its purposes were fulfilled,

rounded, complete without a flaw. . . . They were united for CHAP. XI.  
 'better and worse,' and there was a sacredness in the thought <sup>Sept.-Dec.</sup>  
 of the 'worse' they might share which gave a mysterious and <sup>1814.</sup>  
 celestial charm to the present 'better.' . . . The young pair  
 walked together in the parks at such morning hours as would  
 prevent their meeting any acquaintances. . . . Villiers also  
 traced his daily, weary, disappointing way to his solicitor,  
 where he found things look more blank and dismal each day.  
 Then when evening came, and the curtains were drawn, they  
 might have been at the top of Mount Caucasus instead of in  
 the centre of London, so completely were they cut off from  
 everything except each other. They then felt absolutely  
 happy; the lingering disgusts of Edward were washed clean  
 away by the bounteous, ever-springing love that flowed, as  
 waters from a fountain, from the heart of Ethel, in one per-  
 petual tide." But presently his detested foes, the bailiffs, are  
 upon Edward's track. Husband and wife are again parted,  
 while he lurks from pursuers at the London Coffee House, and  
 she in agitation waits for the little notes brought from her  
 beloved by messenger or faithful friend at morning and  
 evening. "You do not understand these things," he writes,  
 "and will wonder when I tell you, that when the clock strikes  
 twelve on Saturday night, the magic spells and potent charms  
 of Saunders's friends [the bailiffs] cease to have power: at that  
 hour I shall be restored to you. . . . Adieu till this evening,  
 and then, as Belvidera says, *Remember twelve.*" During brief,  
 blissful moments, when the happy Sunday has gone by, they  
 meet in the bitter winter streets (for the winter is one of  
 unusual severity). "They parted, and often Edith arrived  
 nearly senseless at Duke Street [her lodgings], and once or  
 twice fainted on entering the warm room." Resolved to be  
 together, they betake themselves to a country inn at Brixton;  
 but so little needed is the purse which Edith nets, that they  
 lack the means of procuring a dinner, and the prudent landlady  
 declines to serve a meal until the morning bill be paid. Well,



CHAP. XI. Edward had his volume of Shakespeare beside him, and could  
 Sept.—Dec. 1814. beguile the hours, while waiting for expected succour, by reading aloud some scenes from “Troilus and Cressida.” To him there is a certain sense of degradation in being unable to protect one who depended on him for protection from the world’s insults; to her, it was an exquisite pleasure to have the sense of her union with him quickened by common suffering. “Her heart was full of benevolence to all mankind. Besides her attachment to her husband, the prospect of becoming a mother within a few months opened another source of tenderness; there seemed to be a superabundance of happiness within her, a portion of which she desired to impart to those she loved.”\*

In all this there is little that was not drawn directly from Mrs. Shelley’s recollections of the autumn and winter of 1814, and the vividness of the feelings when recalled gives evidence of their original intensity. The days of sorest trial, including those of severance from Shelley, lay between October 23 and November 9. On the evening before the earlier of these dates—a Saturday evening—just when the table-cloth had been removed after the six-o’clock dinner, the servant of the lodgings—lodgings now in St. Pancras—entered with a letter, which had been delivered by a little boy, who said that it had been given to him by a lady waiting in the opposite field. The letter was from Fanny Godwin, and warned Shelley, it would seem, of some design against his personal liberty, in which directly or indirectly the Hookham brothers were believed to be concerned.† A little later Godwin declared to Fanny that if she should see her sister Mary he would never speak to her again, and Mrs. Godwin refused to allow her—a young woman of twenty—to come down to dinner because she had received

\* The arrest and imprisonment of Villiers is an addition, made in the interest of her tale, to the facts taken by Mrs. Shelley from real life.

† The debt was, I believe, one of Harriet’s, for which, of course, Shelley was responsible, and perhaps Hookham had informed the creditor—Chartres—of Shelley’s address.

a lock of Mary's hair ; but Fanny, while obedient and anxious CHAP. XI.  
Sept.—Dec.  
1814. to please those who stood to her in the place of parents, was attached to Mary, her nearest in kinship—her mother's child—and for Shelley her regard was true and deep. She had not dared to run counter to Godwin's instructions by entering the St. Pancras lodgings ; but she could not leave Mary and Shelley in ignorance of impending danger. Starting up, Shelley and Clara ran to the field opposite their place of abode. There stood Fanny. Clara caught her, on which, screaming, she shook herself free and escaped. "Shelley and I," wrote Clara in her journal, "hasten to Skinner Street. We watch through the window. We see Papa, Mamma, and Charles. Step into Wallis's and write Charles a little note : take it into the shop myself ; I request a moment's interview. Charles, after much deliberation, grants it. He comes out. I ask him everything about the Hookhams. He denies knowing anything in such a voice that I thought him sincere." Next day, Sunday, was one of careless freedom for debtors at large, when no bailiff takes, "so hallow'd and so gracious is the time." Shelley was determined first to understand, and then, if possible, anticipate and avert the coming danger. Clara's journal relates the events of the day, and shows how useful she could be as an intermediary between Mary and the Godwin household, and again between Shelley and Harriet. When night came, Shelley and Mary were for the first time parted, he having taken refuge against approaching evil with his friend Peacock in Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane. "Get up at six," Clara writes. "Mary, Shelley, and I go to Skinner Street ; watch till the shutters are opened ; ring at the bell ; Fanny opens it ; talk to her ; surprising treachery of the Hookhams. I find Charles deceived me last night. After five minutes' conversation with Fanny we return ; call in our way back at Southampton Buildings ; breakfast there. Mary and I return to Pancras by ourselves. Shelley and Peacock to Hookham, and Tahourdin [a lawyer] ; Hookham not at home ; the little sly rascal got out

CHAP. XI. of the way. Shelley returns alone about one. Consult how  
 Sept.-Dec. 1814. to raise fifty pounds for Chartres, in the course of which consultation we all quarrel; Shelley makes all right again in his usual way. Peacock comes. Set out by myself for Chapel Street; \* write a letter to Harriet; bear one from Shelley; drop the letters; wait up and down Park Lane; call again; receive a letter for S[helley]; return about six; have tea; Peacock and Shelley set off about half-past eight; sleep with Mary; Harriet promises to raise money for Chartres."

In good time Shelley quitted his St. Pancras lodgings, for next day and again on Wednesday "suspicious men" knocked, and inquired for him. "A visit from Shelley's old friends," writes Mary (journal, October 26); "they go away much disappointed and very angry." To raise sufficient money to meet the most pressing debts was Shelley's endeavour morning after morning, and meanwhile for instant necessities five pounds were procured by pawning or selling his beloved microscope. At the London Coffee House in St. Paul's Churchyard, in Holborn, at Southampton or Bartlett's Buildings, in Kentish Town Fields, meetings with Mary were contrived, from which she would return strengthened at heart by the comfort of loving words, but sometimes, after pacings to and fro, while business engagements still detained Shelley, with faint and weary limbs, "tired," she says, "to death." Frequent letters were despatched to make appointments for meeting, or, when an interview was difficult and dangerous, to fill with fond assurances the vacancy of absence. These letters—the first that were exchanged between Shelley and Mary since their lives had been united—were held precious by both, and were carefully preserved; many of them still remain in the possession of Shelley's son: they are for the most part undated, but entries in the journal enable us in several instances to fix their dates.

\* On October 20 Shelley heard that Harriet had left her father's house in Chapel Street; if she did so, she had returned by the 23rd. A few weeks later her son was born at her father's house, and she was certainly there as late as the closing days of January, 1815.

*Shelley to Mary.*

[Monday, October 24, 1814.]

CHAP. XI.Sept.—Dec.  
1814.

Staples Inn is within the jurisdiction of Middlesex. You may meet me with perfect safety at Adams', No. 60, Fleet Street; I shall be in the shop precisely at twelve o'clock. This separation is a calamity not to be endured patiently; I cannot support your absence. I thought that it would be less painful to me; but I feel a solitariness and a desolation of heart where you have been accustomed to be. But, my beloved, this will not last; prudence and self-denial will discomfit our enemies. I shall meet you soon; be punctual. Bring the letters.

When Mary, starting from her St. Pancras lodgings at eleven, arrived at Adams's in Fleet Street, Shelley was not there. Having lingered as long as might be, walking up and down the street, she then proceeded to Peacock's in Southampton Buildings, and turning and re-turning between Peacock's and the appointed place of meeting, at length left Clara to keep watch in Fleet Street, and made her way back to the lodgings, a little before the arrival of the bailiffs. Here she received a happy surprise in the form of a letter from Shelley, explaining the cause of his failure to keep the engagement of the morning.

*Shelley to Mary.*

[Afternoon of Monday, October 24, 1814.]

I could not meet you at Adams'; I was unable to come before *one*, and of course missed you. My own beloved girl, we shall soon be restored to each other. The wretchedness of our separation I am convinced will endow me with eloquence and energies adequate to the peril. I am mournful and dejected *now*, but it is exquisite pleasure that I feel compared with the happiest moments of former times. Yes; a few days—perhaps a few hours—and the most inveterate of our enemies cannot deprive us of each other.

I have spent the day at Ballachy's [one of the "lawyers' holes"]. I have been indefatigable in painting to him the horrible aspect of my affairs; he is indolent and listless, but not like the Hookhams—a cool villain. He sent for a friend of his, Mr. Watts, a stockbroker.

## CHAP. XI.

Sept.—Dec.  
1814.

Mr. Watts is an old, somewhat benevolent-looking, bald-headed man. He said he would perhaps lend me £400; he will give his answer on Thursday [October 27]. He seemed touched by my misfortunes, and indignant at the treachery of the Hookhams. I have reason to think that, if he lends me this money on *post-obit*, I may place the action to the credit of human nature.

My imagination is confounded by the uniform prospect of the perfidy, wickedness, and hard-heartedness of mankind.

Mary most amply redeems their blackest crimes! But I confess to you that I have been shocked and staggered by Godwin's cold injustice. The places where I have seen that man's fine countenance bring bitterness home to my heart to think of his cutting cruelty.

I care not for the Hookhams; I'll tear their hearts out by the roots with irony and sarcasm, if I find that they have dared to lift a thought against me. But in my absence from you, light of my life, my very spirit of hope, I have at moments almost felt despair to think how cold and worldly Godwin has become.

When, when shall I meet you? I am at the London Coffee House. Write to me, but do not send a porter; send Peacock or come yourself. *Ουκ έχω αγγυριον.*

I send you the *Times* newspaper; see where I have marked with ink, and stifle your horror and indignation till we meet.\*

I so passionately love my own Mary that we must not be absent long. Give my love to Jane. I think that she has a sincere affection for you.

*Εμουν κριτεριον των αγαθων τοδε.*

To send Peacock, when she could go herself, was not the dictate of Mary's heart, and at the London Coffee House she had the joy of finding Shelley. That evening the microscope was parted with to Davison of Skinner Street; and having dined at Peacock's, Mary and Clara, sore wearied, returned home with the luxury—which had indeed become the necessity—of a coach.†

\* My friend, Mr. W. J. Craig, points out to me that in the *Times* for Saturday, October 22, 1814, is a letter of over two columns on the Abolition of the Slave Trade, giving very dreadful pictures of the horrors of the slavers' caravans, chiefly drawn from Mungo Park's "Travels," a book from which Shelley read aloud to Mary in December, 1814.

† Clara's diary is here worth printing. "*Monday, October 24.—Rise at eight;*

"Be happy, dear Shelley, and think of me," is the burden of Mary's letter written next morning.

CHAP. XI.

Sept.-Dec.  
1814.*Mary to Shelley.*

[Tuesday, October 25.]

For what a minute did I see you yesterday. Is this the way, my beloved, we are to live till the 6th? In the morning when I wake I turn to look for you. Dearest Shelley, you are solitary and uncomfortable. Why cannot I be with you, to cheer you and press you to my heart? Ah! my love, you have no friends; why then should you be torn from the only one who has affection for you? But I shall see you to-night, and this is the hope that I shall live on through the day. Be happy, dear Shelley, and think of me! Why do I say this, dearest and only one? I know how tenderly you love me, and how you repine at your absence from me. When shall we be free from fear of treachery? I send you the letter I told you of from Harriet, and a letter we received yesterday from Fanny [this letter made appointments for a meeting between Fanny and Clara]; the history of this interview I will tell you when I come, but perhaps as it is so rainy a day Fanny will not be allowed to come at all. I was so dreadfully tired yesterday that I was

breakfast; write my journal. M[ary] reads aloud 'She Stoops to Conquer.' She sets out to see Shelley at eleven. I stay at home and read 'Political Justice.' Go about one to Mrs. Peacock's. Mary comes; she has not seen Shelley; she goes home. I return and stay in Fleet Street till three o'clock; come back to Peacock's; Maryanne there; go home to Pancras; I find M[ary] set out for London again; suspicious men been in my absence; set out again for Southampton Buildings—find only poor old Mrs. P[eacock] at home; have some grumbling conversation with her; most luckily M. comes in search of P.; she had been to the Coffee-house and seen Shelley. I go out to him in Holborn; we go to Harris's the optician; he won't have our microscope; I go to Peacock, fetch him and the microscope; he talks to Shelley a little while in Holborn. S. and I go to Davison's in Skinner Street. We are sent away for half an hour; walk up and down Chatham Place, though we are both so tired we can hardly stand. I am so hungry, for I had had nothing since breakfast, and it was now six o'clock. Return again to Davison and get five pounds for our microscope. In my absence Peacock had gone all the way to Pancras; we were not at home; he sees the waiter of St. James's Hotel there; much frightened and returns home. Part with S. in Holborn; send Peacock to him. Have some dinner in Southampton Street; return with M. in a coach about half-past eight. Find that a gentleman (I suppose Charles) had been with a letter from Fanny to me in our absence; that the extraordinary way he had knocked at the door had almost frightened the children into fainting fits. Fanny requests an interview at Marshall's to-morrow. Bed at nine."

CHAP. XI. obliged to take a coach home. Forgive this extravagance, but I am  
 Sept.-Dec. 1814. so very weak at present, and I had been so agitated through the  
 day, that I was not able to stand; a morning's rest, however, will  
 set me quite right again; I shall be well when I meet you this  
 evening. Will you be at the door of the Coffee House at five o'clock,  
 as it is disagreeable to go into such places? I shall be there exactly  
 at that time, and we can go into St. Paul's, where we can sit down.

I send you "Diogenes," as you have no books.\* Hookham was  
 so ill-tempered as not to send the book I asked for.

*Shelley to Mary.*

[? Same day as last, October 25.]

I have written an extremely urgent letter to Harriet to induce  
 her to send money. I have written also to Hookham, who did not  
 call upon Peacock. I have told Harriet that I shall be at Pancras  
 when her answer arrives. I shall see you to-night, my beloved  
 Mary, fear not. I have confidence in the fortunate issue of our  
 distresses. I am desolate and wretched in your absence; I feel  
 disturbed and wild even to conceive that we should be separated.  
 But this is most necessary, nor must we omit caution even on our  
 unfrequent meetings. Recollect that I am lost if the people can  
 have watched you to me. I wander restlessly about; I cannot  
 read or even write; but this will soon pass. I should not inflict  
 my own Mary with my dejection; she has sufficient cause for  
 disturbance to need consolation from me. Well, we shall meet  
 to-day. I cannot write, but I love you with so unalterable love  
 that the contemplation of me will serve for a letter. If you see  
 Hookham, do not insult him openly; I have still hopes. We must  
 not resign an inch of hope. I will make this remorseless villain  
 loathe his own flesh in good time; he shall be cut down in his  
 season; his pride shall be trampled into atoms; I will wither up  
 his selfish soul by piecemeal.

Σμερδναισι γαμφηλαισι συριζων φονον.†

*Shelley to Mary.*

[? Thursday morning, October 27.]

I write to tell you when you come to bring the £5 with  
 you. Perhaps it were as well to bring the pistols to Davidson's

\* Probably a translation of Wieland's "Diogenes."

† "Hissing forth murder with awful jaws" (Æschylus, "Prometheus," 355).

[the shop or pawn-office at which Shelley had parted with his CHAP.XI.  
microscope].

Sept.-Dec.  
1814.

All is yet confused and undecided. I write this at Ballachy's.

Do not on any account call at Peacock's or write to him again.  
I will explain at three o'clock.

I am full of business and of hopes.

Watch if you are followed.

My dearest, best Mary, let me see your sweet eyes full of happiness when we meet; all will be well. I hope to have deserved many kisses.

*Mary to Shelley.\**

[Thursday morning, October 27, in reply to the last.]

MY OWN LOVE,

I do not know by what compulsion I am to answer you, but your porter says I must; so I do.

By a miracle I saved your £5 and I will bring it. I hope indeed, oh my loved Shelley, we shall indeed be happy.

I meet you at three and bring heaps of Skinner Street news. Heaven bless my love and take care of him.

HIS OWN MARY.

*Shelley to Mary.*

[Night of the same day, October 27.]

Oh! my dearest love, why are our pleasures so short and so interrupted? How long is this to last?

Know you, my best Mary, that I feel myself, in your absence, almost degraded to the level of the vulgar and impure. I feel their vacant, stiff eyeballs fixed upon me, until I seem to have been infected with their loathsome meaning—to inhale a sickness that subdues me to languor. Oh! those redeeming eyes of Mary, that they might beam upon me before I sleep! Praise my forbearance—oh! beloved one—that I do not rashly fly to you, and at least secure a moment's bliss. Wherefore should I delay; do you not long to meet me? All that is exalted and buoyant in my nature urges me towards you, reproaches me with cold delay, laughs at

\* I give this letter from a transcript of that in the possession of Mr. C. W. Frederickson, of New York, to whose kindness I am largely indebted. Its correspondence with the preceding letter (in Sir Percy Shelley's possession) proves that it may be accepted as genuine.



CHAP. XI. all fear and spurns to dream of prudence. Why am I not with you?  
 Sept.—Dec. 1814.

Alas! we must not meet.

I have written a long letter to Jane, though in no mood for writing; I have directed it in a feigned hand to surprise her.

I did not, for I could not, express to you my admiration of your letter to Fanny; the simple and impressive language in which you clothed your argument, the full weight you gave to every part, the complete picture you exhibited of what you intended to describe, was more than I expected.

How hard and stubborn must be the spirit that does not confess you to be the subtlest and most exquisitely fashioned intelligence; that among women there is no equal mind to yours! And I possess this treasure! How beyond all estimate is my felicity! Yes; I am encouraged—I care not what happens; I am most happy.

Meet me to-morrow at three o'clock in St. Paul's, if you do not hear before.

Adieu; remember love at vespers before sleep. I do not omit *my* prayers.

Saturday night now drew near, when the parted ones might be reunited. On Friday evening came a letter from Mrs. Godwin to Mary, who was now and for many subsequent years regarded by her father's wife with implacable animosity,\* as the author of all the calamities of Clara's life and the manifold woes of Skinner Street. "She is a woman I shudder to think of," writes Mary in her journal (October 28). "My poor Father! if—but it will not do." A fragment of a letter of this evening from Mary to Shelley comments on the conduct of her father and his wife.

### *Shelley to Mary.*

[Friday night, October 28.]

My beloved Mary, I know not whether these transient meetings produce not as much pain as pleasure. What have I said? I do

\* The evidence of this statement is abundant in Mrs. Gisborne's diary for 1820.

not mean it. I will not forget the sweet moments when I saw CHAP.XI.  
 your eyes—the divine rapture of the few and fleeting kisses. Yet, <sup>Sept.—Dec.</sup>  
 indeed, this must cease; indeed we must not part thus wretchedly <sup>1814.</sup>  
 to meet amid the comfortless tumult of business; to part, I know  
 not how.

Well, dearest love, to-morrow— to-morrow night. That eternal clock! Oh, that I could “fright the steeds of lazy-paced Time”! I do not think that I am less impatient now than formerly to repossess—to entirely engross—my own treasured love. It seems so unworthy a cause for the slightest separation. I could reconcile it to my own feelings to go to prison if they would cease to persecute us with interruptions. Would it not be better, my heavenly love, to creep into the loathliest cave so that we might be together?

Mary, love, we must be reunited. I will not part from you again after Saturday night. We must devise some scheme. I must return. Your thoughts alone can waken mine to energy; my mind, without yours, is dead and cold as the dark midnight river when the moon is down. It seems as if you alone could shield me from impurity and vice. If I were absent from you long, I should shudder with horror at myself; my understanding becomes undisciplined without you. I believe I must become in Mary’s hands, what Harriet was in mine. Yet how differently disposed—how devoted and affectionate—how, beyond measure, reverencing and adoring the intelligence that governs me! I repent me of this simile; it is unjust; it is false. Nor do I mean that I consider you much my superior, evidently as you surpass me in originality and simplicity of mind. How divinely sweet a task it is to imitate each other’s excellences, and each moment to become wiser in this surpassing love, so that, constituting but one being, all real knowledge may be comprised in the maxim *γνῶθι σεαυτον* (know thyself), with infinitely more justice than in its narrow and common application!

I enclose you Hookham’s note; what do you think of it?

My head aches; I am not well; I am tired with this comfortless estrangement from all that is dear to me.

My own dearest love, good night.

I meet you at Staples Inn at twelve to-morrow—half an hour before twelve.

I have written to Hooper and Sir J. Shelley.

CHAP. XI.Sept.—Dec.  
1814.*Mary to Shelley (a fragment).*

[Same night as last, October 28.]

So this is the end of my letter, dearest love. What do they mean? \* I detest Mrs. Godwin; she plagues my father out of his life; and these—— Well, no matter. Why will Godwin not follow the obvious bent of his affections, and be reconciled to us? No; his prejudices, the world, and *she*—do you not hate her, my love?—all these forbid it. What am I to do?—trust to time, of course, for what else can I do? Good night, my love; to-morrow I will seal this blessing on your lips. Dear, good creature, press me to you, and hug your own Mary to your heart. Perhaps she will one day have a father: till then be everything to me, love, and indeed I will be a good girl and never vex you. I will learn Greek, and—but when shall we meet when I may tell you all this, and you will so sweetly reward me? Oh! we must meet soon, for this is a dreary life. I am weary of it; a poor widowed, deserted thing, no one cares for her; but ah, love, is not that enough? I have a very sincere affection for my Shelley. But good night; I am wofully tired and so sleepy. Sleeping I shall dream of you, ten to one, when you, naughty one, have quite forgotten me. Take me—one kiss—well, that is enough. To-morrow!

With the regularity of ordinary dawns the sun rose on the longed-for to-morrow, and some hours after his setting—a little past midnight—Shelley was restored to his home and to her who was its heart of joy. Next day it was seen that Hookham could act a friendly part, and at evening, unable to separate, Shelley and Mary took shelter together at an inn—the Cross Keys, in St. John's Street.

"*Sunday, October 30* [Mary's journal].—Rise late; talk with Shelley all day. Hookham calls; advises Shelley not to return to the London Coffee House. This man has repented him of his wicked deeds. In the evening Shelley and I go to an inn in St. John's Street to sleep. Those that love cannot separate; Shelley could not have gone away without me again."

\* Referring to Mrs. Godwin's letter.

The master of the tavern, untouched by considerations of CHAP. XI. sentiment, began soon to look with suspicious eyes on the <sup>Sept.-Dec. 1814.</sup> young gentleman and lady, slenderly provided with luggage, who had arrived late on Sunday evening; and on Tuesday he announced his resolution to serve no more food until they had proved to him that there was money in their purse. Tardy aid arrived before nightfall from Hookham, and a supply of cakes purchased by Shelley, with coin supplied by Peacock, stayed their hunger during the interval. At night Shelley was received by Peacock in Southampton Buildings, having first seen Mary safe and at rest in her St. Pancras lodgings.

"*Tuesday, November 1* [Mary's journal].—Learn Greek all morning. Shelley goes to the 'Change. Jane calls. People want their money; won't send up dinner, and we are all very hungry. Jane goes to Hookham. Shelley and I talk about her character. Jane returns without money. . . . Shelley goes to Peacock's; comes home with cakes. Wait till T. Hookham sends money to pay the bill. Shelley returns to Pancras. Have tea and go to bed. Shelley goes to Peacock's to sleep."

*Shelley to Mary.*

[Wednesday morning, November 2, 1814.]

MY BELOVED GIRL,

I think it dangerous that you should see me to-day, or at least until evening. I suspect that your or Jane's coming here might afford an occasion of discovery, against which it would be impossible to provide by any foresight. I consent to resign this exquisite pleasure only because it is so clearly apparent to me that the most horrid consequences might ensue. I think that you had better continue to send to the Hookhams in the course of the day to learn the course of Mrs. Stewart's affair.\* It is this, of course, which I dread. How lonely and desolate are these solitary nights! This wretched and comfortless waking I cannot contemplate without a feeling that approaches to despair! How terrible if month after month I should pass without you, or only to see you by snatches or moments! All now depends on avoiding Mrs. Stewart.

\* Mrs. Stewart was one of the creditors.

CHAP. XI. I shall not remain at Peacock's—I will not incur the least risk. A  
 Sept.—Dec. few days—perhaps a few hours—will terminate our difficulties.  
 1814.

Love me, my dearest, best Mary, love me in confidence and security; do not think of me as one in danger, or even in sorrow. The remembrance and expectation of such sweet moments as we experienced last night consoles, strengthens, and redeems me from despondency; there is eternity in these moments; they contain the true elixir of immortal life. My best love, adieu.

*Shelley to Mary.*

Thursday evening [November 3].

I received both your letters this evening; they were apparently written at different times. The post is too uncertain and dilatory to be endured.

The threatened arrest of Godwin on Thursday I have not heard of before this moment. So soon as I have finished this letter I shall seek for Lambert [Godwin's creditor]; if my interference would ever have been effectual, it may still be so, as I learn that three days are always allowed before any proceeding is commenced. I should have delayed writing until after this visit, if I did not fear to lose the eight-o'clock delivery. I have seen the Farmer [a Sussex farmer, from whom Shelley hoped for a loan]; he requires that some responsible person should guarantee the payment of the money. I shall offer Hookham an indemnity to perform this piece of service. I suspect that there are very powerful persuasive reasons that will assist my plea. Of course I have yet heard no more of Ballarat. I am full of confidence and hope in this affair; I hardly doubt the event. Unless I were thus fully confident, I would not venture to excite your expectations. But to-morrow at three—at *three*—you will meet me at Gray's Inn Gardens, and the result will then be known!

My own beloved Mary, do I not love you? Is not your image the only consolation to my lonely and benighted condition? Do I not love you with a most unextinguishable love? a feeling that well compensates for the altered looks of those who love none but themselves. What sentiment but disgust and indignation is excited by the desertion of those who fly because they think constancy *imprudent!*

The feeling is sweet, most ennobling, and producing a celestial balm, with which the sick and weary spirit reposes upon one who

may not be doubted; to whom the slightest taint of suspicion is death—irrevocable annihilation. To-morrow, blest creature, I shall clasp you again—for ever. Shall it be so? This is the ancient language, that love alone can translate. Best, dearest, adieu—one kiss.

CHAP. XI.  
Sept.—Dec.  
1814.

I have most hopes of the Sussex Farmer.

*Mary to Shelley.*

[Thursday night, November 3.]

DEAREST LOVE,

I am so out of spirits; I feel so lonely; but we shall meet to-morrow; so I will try to be happy. Gray's Inn Gardens is, I fear, a dangerous place; yet can you think of any other? I received your letter to-night. I wanted one, for I had not received one for nearly two days; but do not think I mean anything by this, my love.\* I know you took a long, long walk yesterday, and so you could not write; but I, who am at home, who do not walk out, I could write to you all day, love. Another circumstance has made me feel more solitary—that letter I received to-day. † Dear Shelley, you will say I was deceived; I know I am not. I know her unexampled frankness and sweetness of character; but what must that character be who resists opinions preach— Oh dear! what am I writing? I am indeed disappointed. I did think Isabel perfectly unprejudiced. She adores the shade of my mother. But then a married man. It is impossible to knock into some people's heads that Harriet is selfish and unfeeling, and that my father might be happy if he chose. By that cant of selling his daughter I should half suspect that there has been some communication between the Skinner Street folks and them. Heigho, love, such is the world. How you philosophize and reason about love! Do you know, if I had been asked I could not have given one reason in its favour, yet I have as great an opinion as you concerning its exaltedness, and love very tenderly, to prove my

\* Shelley's letter of Wednesday morning, directed "Mary," had been delivered early, by hand.

† A letter bringing to a close Mary's relations with her girl-friend in Dundee, Isabel Baxter. The letter was written by Mr. David Booth, a man remarkable for his talents and force of character, of whom we shall hear again. Miss Isabella Baxter was engaged to be married (if she was not already married) to Mr. Booth. Journal, November 3: "Receive a letter from Mr. Booth; so all my hopes are over there. Ah! Isabel, I did not think you would act thus."

CHAP. XI. theory. Adieu for the present; it has struck eight, and in an hour or two I will wish you good-night. Well, so now I am to write a good-night, with the old story of "I wish I could say it to you." Yes, my love, it has indeed become an old story, but I hope the last chapter is come. I shall meet you to-morrow, love; if you do but get money, and indeed you must, we will defy our enemies and our friends (for aught I see they are all as bad as one another), and we shall not part again. Is not that a delightful word? It shall cheer my dreams.

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1814.

Oh! how I long to be at our dear home, where nothing can trouble us, neither friends nor enemies! Don't be angry at this, love, for you know they are all a bad set; but Nantgwillt—do you not wish to be settled there, in a house you know, love, with your own Mary—nothing to disturb you, studying, walking? Oh! it is much better, believe me, not to be able to see the light of the sun for mountains than for houses.

You do not say a word in your letter, you naughty love, to ease one of my anxieties—not a word of Lambert, of Harriet, of Mrs. Stewart, of money, or anything—but all the reasonings you used to persuade Mr. Peacock love was a good thing. Now you know I did not want converting; but, my love, do not be displeased at my chattering in this way, for you know that the expectation of a letter from you when absent always makes my heart jump, so do you think it says nothing when one actually arrives?

Your own Mary, who loves you so tenderly.

*Shelley to Mary.*

[Friday, November 4.]

So my beloved boasts that she is more perfect in the practice than I in the theory of love. Is it thus? No, sweet Mary, you only meant that you loved me more than you could express; that reasoning was too cold and slow for the rapid fervour of your conceptions. Perhaps, in truth, Peacock had infected me; my disquisitions were cold—my subtleties unmeaningly refined; and I am a harp responsive to every wind—the scented gale of summer can wake it to sweet melody, but rough, cold blasts draw forth discordances and jarring sounds.

My own love, did I not appear happy to-day? \* For a few

\* Mary and Clara had met Shelley in Gray's Inn Gardens. Clara was perhaps in the way, for she enters in her journal, "I am much disappointed in Shelley

moments I was entranced in most delicious pleasure; yet I was absent and dejected. I knew not when we might meet again, when I might hold you in my arms, and gaze on your dear eyes at will, and snatch momentary kisses in the midst of one happy hour, and sport in security with my entire and unbroken bliss. I was about to return—whither? oh! I knew not, nor was it matter of concern—from you, from our delightful peace to the simple expectation of felicity. *I shall* be happy is not so divine as *I am*. “To be content to let ‘I dare not’ wait upon ‘I would,’ like the poor cat i’ the adage,” to those who love is feverish agitation and sickening disquietude; and my poor Mary that loves me with such tenderness and truth—is her loneliness no pain to me? ‘But to-morrow night at half-past twelve!’\*

CHAP. XI.  
Sept.—Dec.  
1814.

I called on Lambert at five, when we parted; he was absent from town; I am to meet him to-morrow morning. I called on Pike; he proposes £12,000 ready money for the reversion of Goring Castle. Before I conclude anything it shall be fairly valued. I should think myself fortunate to get this price, although the expense of the building was so immense.

Hookham has been with me. I do not despair of arranging something with Charles, so that £100 may be placed at my disposal. Hookham is to meet me with Charles on ‘Change to-morrow. I shall previously have disposed of Ballachy to my purpose, and entertain some confidence of success.† H. seems interested in the affair. Mrs. B. will go to the London Coffee House to-morrow and call for my letters. I hope to hear from Sir John [Shelley-Sidney]. Mrs. Stewart’s affair, which I have most of all at heart—that relentless enemy of all comfort—remains as it did. H. urges Tahourdin to complete it; but she will not at present. I expect to hear from Hooper to-morrow. Thus it is my letters are full of money, whilst my being overflows with unbounded love and elevated thoughts. How little philosophy and affection consort with this turbid scene—this dark scheme of things finishing in unfruitful death! There are moments in your absence, my love, when the bitterness with which I regret

to-day. I thought him uniformly kind and considerate, but I find him act as weakly as other people.”

\* The second Saturday night, when the bailiffs lost their power for twenty-four hours.

† The journal tells us (October 31) of Ballachy’s “rascally proposition for £300 a year till his [Shelley’s] father’s death for £15,000 of *post-obit*.”



CHAP. XI. the unrecoverable time wasted in unprofitable solitude and worldly  
 Sept.-Dec. cares is a most painful weight; you alone reconcile me to myself  
 1814. and to my beloved hopes.

Good night, my excellent love, my own Mary.

Another happy Sunday closed with another sorrowful parting. "Talk with Shelley all evening," Mary writes in her journal; "this is a day devoted to Love in idleness." But the sea of troubles was now on the ebb: by Wednesday, November 9, all danger of arrest was over; the lodgings at Mrs. Page's, Church Terrace, St. Pancras, were given up, and others more suitable or more convenient were taken in Nelson Square, and once again Shelley and Mary were together.

*Shelley to Mary.*

[Date uncertain.\*]

Meet me at *one* and not at *three*, at St. Paul's. I will be there at *one*. Your "good night," my own love, came most welcome. I did not forget to kiss your *ειδωλον κενον* before I slept, and I slept last night, thanks to your sweet "good night." I think we had better immediately get other lodgings, as now all danger but from Mrs. Stewart is over. What think you of Pimlico or Sloane Street? Talk of this with Jane before you come.

*Shelley to Mary.*

[Tuesday, November 8.]

Call on me at four o'clock.

I have heard nothing. I have sent to Hookham; his answer is that he will call in the course of the day.

I shall now go out and seek lodgings; I shall not decide on them until I have Hookham's answer.

I saw Hogg last night; I am disappointed in him, though my expectations were very moderate.

I cannot write.

My dearest, best love, only one more day, and we meet. Your affection is my only and sufficient consolation. I find that I

\* I find it difficult to assign this letter to November 7 or 8, yet it is more difficult to place it elsewhere.

have no personal interest in any human being but you, and you CHAP.XI.  
I love with my whole nature.

Sept.-Dec.  
1814.

"Could you be so long absent?" asks Marian of Robin, in Ben Jonson's pastoral play. "What, a week?" replies Robin; "was that so long?" And Marian answers—

"How long are lovers' weeks,  
Do you think, Robin, when they are asunder?  
Are they not prisoners' years?" \*

The "prisoners' years" were now over for Shelley and Mary; each was restored to the freedom of the other's welcoming arms.

NOTE.—The following list of books, read by Shelley and Mary in 1814, is printed from Mary Shelley's manuscript.

#### MARY.

(Those marked \* Shelley has read also.)

- \*Letters from Norway [by Mary Wollstonecraft].
- \*Mary. A Fiction [by Mary Wollstonecraft].
- \*Wordsworth's Excursion.
- \*Madoc, by Southey. 2 vols.
- \*Curse of Kehama.
- \*Sorcerer. A Novel.
- \*Political Justice. 2 vols.
- \*The Monk. By Lewis. 4 vols.
- \*Thalaba. 2 vols.
- \*The Empire of the Nairs [by Sir James Lawrence].
- \*St. Godwin [a parody on Godwin's St. Leon].
- \*Wrongs of Woman. 2 vols. [by Mary Wollstonecraft].
- Caleb Williams. 3 vols.
- \*Zadig.
- \*Life of Alfieri. By himself. 2 vols.
- \*Essay on Sepulchres [by Godwin].
- \*Louvét's Memoirs.
- Carnot's Memorial.
- \*Lives of the Revolutionists by Adolphus. 2 vols.
- \*Edgar Huntly. 3 vols.
- \*Peregrine Proteus. 2 vols. [by Wieland].
- \*The Italian. 3 vols.
- \*Prince Alexy Haimatoff [by Hogg].
- Philip Stanley, by [Brockden] Brown.

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\* These lines are used by Mrs. Shelley as a motto of one of the chapters of "Lodore."

CHAP. XI.

Sept.-Dec.  
1814.

Miss Baillie's Plays.

\*Moore's Journal [Dr. John Moore].

\*Agathon [Wieland's].

\*Mungo Park's Travels in Africa. 1st Part.

\*Barrow's Embassy to China.

Milton's Letter to Mr. Hartlib.

Emilia Galotti [Lessing's].

\*Bryan Edwards's History of the West Indies.

\*View of the French Revolution. By M. W. G. [Mary Wollstonecraft  
Godwin].

\*Candide.

\*Kirke White.

62 volumes.

SHELLEY.

Diogenes Laertius.

Cicero : Collectanea.

Petronius,

Suetonius,

60 volumes.

## CHAPTER XII.

RESIDENCE IN LONDON AND AT BISHOPSGATE (JANUARY, 1815,  
TO MAY, 1816).

THE opening month of the year 1815 placed Shelley in a new position, and one from which he could withstand the onsets of adversity with a better chance of success. On January 6 his grandfather, Sir Bysshe, upwards of eighty-three years of age, died; \* Shelley's father succeeded to the baronetcy, and he himself became the immediate heir to a great property. Tidings of the old man's death first reached his grandson through the public papers. Accompanied by Clara—travel being now undesirable for Mary—he journeyed into Sussex; and having left his companion at Slinfold, a few miles distant from Horsham, he presented himself at the doors of his former home. By his father's orders he was refused admittance. To hear the long-inwoven clauses of the will read aloud amid the mourning relatives was a privilege denied to an erring grandson; but who could forbid him to sit outside by the door, filling his inward ear with the melody of "Comus," read from Mary's pocket copy of Milton?

CHAP.  
XII.  
Jan. 1815–  
May, 1816.

"How charming is divine philosophy!"

Was ever so ridiculous and provoking a son and heir born to a worthy country squire "While I am at breakfast," wrote

\* The tablet in Horsham Church gives January 6 as the date; the *Examiner* says on Thursday, i.e. January 5, and the *Edinburgh Annual Register* also gives January 5 as the date.

CHAP. Mary (January 13) in her journal, "Shelley and Clara arrive.  
 XII. The will has been opened, and Shelley is referred to Whitton  
 Jan. 1815- [Sir Timothy's solicitor]. His father would not allow him to  
 May, 1816. enter Field Place; he sits before the door and reads 'Comus.'  
 Dr. Blocksome comes out; tells him that his father is very  
 angry with him. Sees my name in Milton. Shelley Sidney  
 comes out; says that it is a most extraordinary will. Shelley  
 returns to Slinfold. Shelley and Clara set out and reach  
 Kingston that night. Shelley goes to Whitton, who tells him  
 that he is to have the income of £100,000 after his father's  
 death if he will entail the estate."

Sir Bysshe's possessions, in real and personal property, which at one time were supposed by his grandson to amount to £240,000, probably did not fall short of £200,000. One portion, valued at £80,000,\* consisted of certain entailed estates, but without Shelley's concurrence the entail could not be prolonged beyond himself. The other portion consisted of landed property, unentailed, and of personal property amounting, it was said, to £120,000. It was Sir Bysshe's desire that this accumulation of his long life should be kept together by his descendants, and should pass from eldest son to eldest son through future generations. But with his grandson lay the power to determine whether this desire should or should not be realized. Should he survive his father, Shelley, on executing certain legal forms, would obtain absolute possession of the fee-simple of the settled estates; and with this in prospect he might now, if he pleased, encumber them, or part with his future interest in them, or leave them by will to a stranger. To avert such a catastrophe, Sir Bysshe in his will offered his grandson a valuable consideration. If he would concur in prolonging the entail, and further, would agree to entail the unsettled estates, he should, after his father's death,

\* In the brief prepared by Longdill for Shelley's counsel in the Chancery case of 1817, he is described as "under the family settlements tenant in tail of the Shelley estates in Sussex, which are probably of the value of £80,000."

not only enjoy their rentals, but also the income to be derived from the great personal property, half of which was to be invested in land by trustees appointed in the interest of Sir Bysse's descendants, and to be settled by them in like manner with the entailed estates. In other words, if Shelley would resign his claim to the fee-simple of the settled estates, and would accept a life-interest in them; if, also, he would concur in entailing the unsettled estates; then, upon the death of his father, all should be his, and should pass, undiminished, from his hands to those of his son. But if Shelley should refuse to accept these conditions, the reversion of the settled estates—for of this it was impossible to deprive him—should alone be his. His power of choice between these two courses was limited to one year after his grandfather's decease.

CHAP.  
XII.  
Jan. 1815–  
May, 1816.

Shelley's negotiations with his father, having for their basis his grandfather's will, extended over nearly eighteen months. Still, as in 1811, he objected, on the ground of moral principles, to the entailing of a great property, but those principles must be "rightly limited and understood." In dealing with his father, with his legal advisers, and with Godwin, who through his own necessitous position was interested in Shelley's chances of being able to afford him relief, he spoke and wrote like a clear-sighted man of business, and rarely, if at all, assigned philosophic-romantic reasons as those which determined his action.\* To possess immense wealth at a remote period, and to leave that wealth to his children, was no part of Shelley's ambition. It seemed to him more in accordance with his true interests, and with the interest of all persons for whose well-being he ought to provide, that he should possess at once and for the rest of his life an ample competency, which would permit him to pursue his true vocation undisturbed by anxieties about money. Let his brother John be the county magnate, and for his own part let him be free to go where he might please, to think, to read, to write, master of sufficient wealth, but not

\* See, however, the letter to Godwin of November 24, 1816, printed later.

CHAP. loaded with riches. To secure such an ample competency,  
 XII. why should he not sell the reversion of the settled estates to  
 Jan. 1815— his father? Longdill, indeed, his solicitor, with a prudent eye  
 May, 1816. for Shelley's future interest, could not advise in favour of such  
 a proposal; but Longdill advised merely from the point of  
 view of a man of the world, not making allowance for Shelley's  
 peculiar tastes and inclinations, to which freedom and ease,  
 with activity in the life intellectual, seemed more to be desired  
 than a load of wealth. Fortunately, Sir Timothy was quite  
 willing that his eldest son should disinherit himself; the per-  
 sonal property, forfeited by Percy Bysshe, would greatly aug-  
 ment the importance of the second son, John, in whom the  
 hopes of the family must now be centred. On discovering  
 that it was his father's desire to buy the reversion of the  
 settled estates, Shelley was less eager to come forward, pru-  
 dently opining that a more favourable bargain might be made  
 if he showed no excessive alacrity in parting with what his  
 father desired to obtain. In the early months of 1815, while  
 the result of these negotiations was still pending, Shelley  
 suffered some lack of the means of living; debts, including  
 those of Godwin, for which he had made himself responsible,  
 still hung heavily around him, amounting to no less than  
 £5000; and in April he wrote urgently to a money-lender,\*  
 requesting him to procure immediately the sum of five hundred  
 pounds. "I have indeed," he said, "the most urgent necessity  
 for the advance of such a sum. Do you think any friends of  
 yours at Worth—do you think Dr. Betham—would lend it me  
 on my bond at a year or eighteen months? I should assuredly  
 be able to pay it when due, since the affair with my father  
 would either have gone off altogether, and then I could make  
 a security on the estate, or we should have agreed on terms,  
 and I should be in immediate possession of my share of the  
 reversion. I am in rather awkward circumstances for want

\* Mr. W. Bryant, who seems to have had some local connection with Sussex. The letter is dated "26, Marchmont Street, April 14."

of £500, and if you should stand my friend in procuring it for me, you may depend on my showing myself a friend to you." CHAP.  
XII.  
Jan. 1815-  
May, 1816.  
Shelley still had occasion to seek such advances of money, on his own account or on that of Godwin; but now his position was a much stronger one than it had been before his grandfather's death, inasmuch as he could offer ample security for a loan.

While the question as to the sale of the principal reversions remained doubtful, it was ascertained that his son's interest in one small portion of the estates, valued at £18,000, might at once be purchased by Sir Timothy. This was done, what was considered as an equivalent of £11,000 being allowed; and in June, 1815, Shelley by the agreement became entitled to a yearly income of one thousand pounds, during the joint lives of his father and himself, secured as a rent-charge out of certain estates, while, in addition, a considerable sum of money was advanced by Sir Timothy towards the payment of his son's debts. On passing from poverty to comparative wealth, and thus becoming owner of a thousand pounds a year, Shelley at once decided to appropriate a just proportion of that sum to the uses of Harriet Shelley. He sent her forthwith two hundred pounds to pay her debts, and he wrote immediately to his father, requesting him to give directions to the bankers, through whom he was to receive the annuity, to pay to Harriet, or to her order, the annual sum of two hundred pounds, in quarterly payments of fifty pounds. Mr. Westbrook continued to his daughter the annuity of two hundred pounds, which he allowed before she and her husband had parted; she was, therefore, now adequately provided for, being in receipt of four hundred pounds a year.\*

Thus Shelley's calamitous position of the winter of 1814 was altered to one of comparative comfort and repose. But if

\* This appears from a statement to that effect made by Whitton to Peacock, and accepted as true, June 24, 1816, by Peacock, who was in communication with Harriet respecting her money affairs. He evidently assumes that she acknowledges the truth of Whitton's statement.



CHAP. XII. it went well with him as regards his worldly goods, he was not free from other causes of discomfort, anxiety, and grief. Jan. 1815– May, 1816. The excitement and exhausting misery of the early summer of 1814, the keen joy mingled with suffering of its later months, the wretched cares, annoyances, and privations of the winter, perhaps also his persistence in the vegetarian diet, told with injurious effect upon his health. In the following spring “an eminent physician,” we are informed by Mrs. Shelley, “pronounced that he was dying rapidly of a consumption; abscesses were formed on his lungs, and he suffered acute spasms.” “Suddenly,” she adds, “a complete change took place, and though through life he was a martyr to pain and debility, every symptom of pulmonary disease vanished.” \* It has been said that he made acquaintance with disease at this time, or a little earlier, not only in his own person, but as a student of medicine in the wards of a hospital. Possibly Shelley’s dream of pursuing the profession of a physician, which had floated before him in 1811, returned during the period of worldly distress in the winter of 1814–15; but that he walked the wards of a hospital may well be doubted. The statement is Medwin’s, † and not a single entry in the journal lends support to the assertion of that untrustworthy witness. Once, for an instant, Shelley acknowledged the attraction of another profession than that of medicine. It may have been in the early summer of 1815, or perhaps later, when Shelley resided at Marlow, that of a sudden he conceived with characteristic vividness the purity and tranquility and moral beauty of the life of the village pastor, and to conceive such a life of pure beneficence

\* The physician was probably Dr. Pemberton, on whom Shelley called about his health on February 28, 1815. “Shelley has a spasm.” “Shelley very unwell,” “Shelley unwell and exhausted,” are entries in the journal for February.

† Leigh Hunt, in the *Literary Examiner*, No. viii., p. 119, says that Shelley had studied something of medicine, “and even walked the hospitals that he might be useful in this way.” I suppose his attendance at Abernethy’s lectures, and visits to St. Bartholomew’s Hospital in 1811, gave rise to the statement. In reprinting in his Autobiography some paragraphs first printed in the *Literary Examiner*, Hunt omits the statement respecting Shelley’s hospital experience.

was to wish for a moment that it were his own. "I well remember the occasion," writes Peacock. "We were walking in the early summer through a village where there was a good vicarage house with a nice garden, and the front wall of the vicarage was covered with corchorus in full flower. . . . He stood some time admiring the vicarage wall. The extreme quietness of the scene, the pleasant pathway through the village churchyard, and the brightness of the summer morning, apparently concurred to produce the impression under which he suddenly said to me, 'I feel strongly inclined to enter the Church. . . . Of the moral doctrines of Christianity I am a more decided disciple than many of its more ostentatious professors. And consider for a moment how much good a good clergyman may do. . . . It is an admirable institution that admits the possibility of diffusing such men over the surface of the land.'" The Reverend P. B. Shelley existed only for this one moment in a floating bubble of the fancy. Perhaps some slumbering Anglican bishop had no cause to lament that the bubble, so delicately coloured, no sooner than it was cast upward, burst.

CHAP.  
XII.  
Jan. 1815-  
May, 1816.

Besides his broken health, other troubles darkened the opening year for Shelley and Mary. On February 22,\* or a few days earlier, a seven-months' babe—a girl—was born. Mary's suffering was well and quickly over; but the little one was not expected to live. To the glad surprise of Shelley and of Mary, on whom the new joy of motherhood was strong, the child seemed to gain in animation, and the first fears passed away. Shelley himself during these days was ailing seriously; but the babe would surely thrive. On Monday, March 6, Mary woke and found her baby dead. The entries in the journal are brief, but poignant with the pathos of a mother's first days of desolation.

[*Shelley the diarist: entry undated in consequence of pages*

\* Pages torn from the journal make the date uncertain: the gap occurs between February 17 and February 23.

CHAP.  
XII.  
Jan. 1815—  
May, 1816.

*torn from journal, but immediately precedes February 23; therefore, perhaps, relating events of February 22.]* “Maie perfectly well and at ease. The child is not quite seven months; the child not expected to live. Shelley sits up with Maie; much agitated and exhausted. Hogg sleeps here.

“*Thursday, February 23.*—Mary quite well; the child, unexpectedly, alive, but still not expected to live. Hogg returns in the evening at half-past seven. Shelley writes to Fanny, requesting her to come and see Maie. Fanny comes and remains the whole night, the Godwins being absent from home. . . .

“*Friday, February 24.*—Maie still well; favourable symptoms in the child; we may indulge some hopes. Hogg calls at two. Fanny departs. Dr. Clarke calls; confirms our hopes of the child. Shelley very unwell. Shelley finishes 2nd vol. of Livy, p. 657. Hogg comes in the evening. Shelley unwell and exhausted.

“*Saturday, February 5.*—The child very well; Maie very well also. . . . In the evening Hogg comes; he is sleepy and goes away soon. Shelley is very unwell.

“*Sunday, February 26* [Mary resumes her diary].—Maie rises to-day. Hogg comes; talk; she goes to bed at six. Hogg calls at the lodgings we have taken. Read ‘Corinne.’ . . . Just settling to sleep when a knock comes to the door; it is Fanny; she came to see how we were; she stays talking till half-past three, and then leaves the room that Shelley and Mary may sleep. Shelley has a spasm.

“*Monday, February 27.*—Rise; talk and read ‘Corinne.’ Hogg comes in the evening. Shelley and Clara go out about a cradle. . . .

“*Tuesday, February 28.*—I come downstairs; talk, nurse the baby, read ‘Corinne’ and work. Shelley goes to Dr. Pemberton about his health.

“*Wednesday, March 1.*—Nurse the baby, read ‘Corinne’ and work. Shelley and Clara out all morning. In the evening

Peacock comes. Talk about types, editions, and Greek letters all the evening. Hogg comes. They go away at half-past eleven. Bonaparte invades France.

CHAP.  
XII.  
Jan. 1815–  
May, 1816.

"*Thursday, March 2.*—A bustle of moving [to new lodgings\*]. Read 'Corinne.' I and my baby go about three. . . .

"*Monday, March 6.*—Find my baby dead. Send for Hogg. Talk. A miserable day. . . .

"*Wednesday, March 8.*—Finish 'Rinaldini.' Talk with Shelley. In very bad spirits, but get better; sleep a little in the day. . . .

"*Thursday, March 9.*—Read and talk. Still think about my little baby—'tis hard indeed for a mother to lose a child.

"*Monday, March 13.*—Shelley and Clara go to town. Stay at home; net, and think of my little dead baby. This is foolish, I suppose; yet whenever I am left alone to my own thoughts, and do not read to divert them, they always come back to the same point—that I was a mother, and am so no longer. Fanny comes, wet through; she dines and stays the evening; talk about many things; she goes at half-past nine. Cut out my new gown.

"*Sunday, March 19.*—Dream that my little baby came to life again; that it had only been cold, and that we rubbed it before the fire, and it lived. Awake and find no baby. I think about the little thing all day. Not in good spirits. Shelley is very unwell.

"*Monday, March 20.*—Dream again about my baby."

That was an eventful day for England and for the world which brought to Mary her first sharp sorrow; corn-law riots in the city; the avenues to the House of Commons surrounded by a military force; in France dismay and hope; the drums

\* Perhaps Shelley and Mary now moved to 26, Marchmont Street, from which letters are dated on April 14 and May 10; or perhaps these lodgings were intermediate between those at which the baby was born and Marchmont Street. On March 28 the diary notes, "Work in the morning and *then walk out to look at house.*"

CHAP. and trappings of a new conquest; the caged eagle escaped  
 XII. from Elba—which surprise for Europe is duly chronicled in  
 Jan. 1815— Mary's journal; and, of dearer import to a mother's heart than  
 May, 1816. these events which loomed dim through a veil of tears, a span-  
 long dead baby, and in the lodgings in Marchmont Street an  
 empty cradle.

Fanny Godwin, as the journal shows by several entries referring to her, had either received permission, or had asserted the right, to be now and again with Mary during her days of weakness and sorrow. But Godwin and his wife still held aloof. On a day late in March, Mary, with Shelley by her side, passed Godwin and Charles Clairmont in the street; in the afternoon Charles called at the lodgings; "he tells us," writes Mary, "that Papa saw us, and that he remarked that Shelley was so beautiful, it was a pity he was so wicked." One who dwells among abstractions, and imaginary human characters worked by ethical machinery, can easily add to his list of *dramatis personæ* the character of the beautiful evil one; to make true acquaintance with the living human being, Shelley, a man made up of diverse parts and passions, was an achievement beyond the powers of Godwin. As to Mrs. Godwin, she was capable of an act of capricious kindness, and on the birth of the babe could send, by Charles's hands, a gift of linen; yet she could not look patiently on the face of Mary, the author of her woes. When she went out from the house in Skinner Street in a temper with her husband, and would not return for the night, to parade up and down before Shelley's window was an odd mode of manifesting her wounded feelings. "*April 10.*—Shelley reads Gibbon. . . . Mrs. Godwin after dinner parades before the windows. Talk in the evening with Hogg about mountains and lakes and London. *April 11.*— . . . Receive letters from Skinner Street to say that Mamma had gone away in the pet and had staid out all night." Affairs in Skinner Street were, indeed, in a lamentable condition, and possibly Mrs. Godwin's "pet" may

have had its sufficient reason. In spite of her honourable exertions to keep the wolf from the door, his hateful pawing and snuffing were always painfully near, and the green fire of his eyes gleamed through gaping chinks. There was talk of Charles Clairmont's going to America—a proposal which seemed to Mary, when she heard of it, "a rather wild project in the Clairmont style." As to Clara, her mother and Godwin hoped that she might be placed in some suitable situation—perhaps with Godwin's acquaintance, Mrs. Knapp. Some such plan had been discussed in October, and Clara had not taken to it kindly.\* To Mary her presence had grown most irksome, and it would have been an infinite relief were Clara suitably provided for in some other home than hers. Though never dreaming that Shelley's love could be transferred to another, Mary had a jealousy, natural and not dishonourable, which made her unwilling to share with another the higher companionship of his mind. In Shelley's walks and talks Clara equally with herself was by his side; in his Italian studies, Clara went forward with him day by day; "Shelley and Clara read 'Pastor Fido,'" "Shelley and Clara begin 'Orlando Furioso'" —these and such-like are Mary's entries in the journal. For Shelley's sake as for her own, it was desirable that she, who was nearest and dearest to him, should not resign any portion of her title to be in a pre-eminent sense his moral and spiritual partner. Therefore it were well if he and she were alone, and all in all each to the other. "Very unwell," Mary writes in the journal (March 11, 1815). "Hogg goes to town. Talk about Clara's going away; nothing settled. I fear it is hopeless. She will not go to Skinner Street; then our house is the only remaining place, I plainly see. What is to be done?"

"*Sunday, March 12.*—Talk a great deal. Not well, but better. Very quiet in the morning, and happy, for Clara does not get up till four. . . .

CHAP.  
XII.Jan. 1815-  
May, 1816.

\* "October 25.—They [the Godwins] want her [Clara] to go into a family. . . . Jane in the dumps all evening about going away."

CHAP.  
XII.Jan. 1815—  
May, 1816.

"*Tuesday, March 14.*—Shelley calls on Dr. Pemberton [about his health]. Net till breakfast. Shelley reads 'Religio Medici' aloud after Hogg has gone to town. Work; finish Hogg's purse. Shelley and I go upstairs and talk of Clara's going; the prospect appears to me more dismal than ever; not the least hope. This is, indeed, hard to bear."\*

Mrs. Bishop still opposed Clara's return to the Skinner Street household, where she would necessarily become the companion—a dangerous companion—of Fanny. Clara herself appears to have had no desire to go into bondage under her mother's eye. If Mrs. Knapp could take her, all would be well; and Godwin, Shelley, and Mary used their endeavours thus to provide a home for Clara. But Mrs. Knapp declined to receive her. At length, towards mid-May, it was decided that Clara should be sent, on the excuse of needing country air, to Lynmouth—a spot known to Shelley and to Godwin; known also to Mrs. Godwin, who had once visited her sister there, and made the acquaintance on that occasion of Mrs. Bicknell, the widow of a retired Indian officer, who resided in a charming cottage on the Devon coast.† Thither, in May, Clara was removed—a consummation devoutly wished at least by Mary, who chronicles the event of Clara's departure with touches of unusual asperity.

"*Friday, May 12.*—Not very well. After breakfast read Spenser. Shelley goes out with his friend [Clara]; he returns first. Construe Ovid (90 lines); read Spenser. Jefferson [Hogg] returns at half-past four, and tells us that poor Sawyer is to be hung. These blessed laws!‡ After dinner read

\* I surmise that Clara a few days later advertised for a situation as companion, this appearing to explain the entry in the journal for March 20: "Return and find more letters for 'A. Z.'—one from a 'disconsolate widow.'"

† Such is the statement made by Mrs. Godwin to Lady Mountcashell. I am not convinced that Mrs. Godwin was ever at Lynmouth, or made the acquaintance of any Mrs. Bicknell.

‡ William Sawyer, a young man in the commissariat department of the British army, and Harriet Gaskett resolved to die together. On April 17, 1814, Harriet swallowed laudanum, and then implored Sawyer to shoot her. This he

Spenser. Read over the Ovid to Jefferson and construe about ten lines more. Read Spenser (canto 10 of 4th book). Shelley and the lady walk out. After tea, talk; write Greek characters. Shelley and his friend have a last conversation.

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"Saturday, May 13.—Clara goes; Shelley walks with her. Charles Clairmont comes to breakfast; talk. Shelley goes out with him. Read Spenser all day (finish canto 8, book 5), Jefferson does not come till five. Get very anxious about Shelley; go out to meet him; return; it rains. Shelley returns at half-past six; the business is finished. After dinner Shelley is very tired, and goes to sleep. Read Ovid (60 lines). Charles Clairmont comes to tea. Talk of pictures. I begin a new journal with our regeneration."

Of Clara Clairmont, whose history was so closely intertwined with that of Shelley and Mary, we shall not hear again until twelve months have elapsed. Before the great calamity of her life came upon her, let us see her for the last time in her bowery cottage at Lynmouth, as described in a letter to Fanny Godwin. Clara, in later years a delightful letter-writer, at seventeen had already a skilful pen.

*Clara Clairmont to Fanny Godwin.*

[Lynmouth] Sunday, May 28, 1815.

MY DEAR FANNY,

Mary writes me that you thought me unkind in not letting you know before my departure; indeed I meant no unkindness, but I was afraid if I told you that it might prevent my putting a plan into execution which I preferred before all the Mrs. Knapps in the world.\* Here I am at liberty; there I should have been under a perpetual restraint. Mrs. Knapp is a forward, impertinent, superficial woman. Here there are none such; a few cottages, with little rosy-faced children, scolding wives, and did; then fired two shots at his own head, and, these not succeeding, afterwards cut his throat. The wound, though severe, was not fatal.

\* This opening sentence supports my surmise that Clara went to Lynmouth, not on her mother's advice, or with her mother's knowledge, but on the advice of Shelley; and that Mrs. Godwin's account of the affair given to Lady Mountcashell was a convenient fabrication.



CHAP. drunken husbands. I wish I had a more amiable and romantic  
 XII. picture to present to you, such as shepherds and shepherdesses,  
 Jan. 1815- flocks and madrigals; but this is the truth, and the truth is best  
 May, 1816. at all times. I live in a little cottage, with jasmine and honey-  
 suckle twining over the window; a little downhill garden, full  
 of roses, with a sweet arbour. There are only two gentlemen's  
 seats here, and they are both absent. The walks and shrubberies  
 are quite open, and are very delightful. Mr. Foote's stands at  
 top of the hill, and commands distant views of the whole country.  
 A green tottering bridge, flung from rock to rock, joins his  
 garden to his house, and his side of the bridge is a waterfall.  
 One tumbles directly down, and then flows gently onward; while  
 the other falls successively down five rocks, and seems like water  
 running down stone steps. I will tell you so far that it is a  
 valley I live in, and perhaps one you may have seen. Two ridges  
 of mountains enclose the village which is situated at the west  
 end. A river, which you may step over, runs at the foot of the  
 mountains, and trees hang so closely over that when on a high  
 eminence you sometimes lose sight of it for a quarter of a mile.  
 One ridge of hills is entirely covered with luxuriant trees; the  
 opposite line is entirely bare, with long pathways of slate and  
 grey rocks, so that you might almost fancy they had once been  
 volcanic. Well, enough of the valleys and the mountains.

You told me you did not think I should ever be able to live  
 alone. If you knew my constant tranquility, how cheerful and  
 gay I am, perhaps you would alter your opinion. I am perfectly  
 happy. After so much discontent, such violent scenes, such a  
 turmoil of passion and hatred, you will hardly believe how  
 enraptured I am with this dear little quiet spot. I am as happy  
 when I go to bed as when I rise. I am never disappointed, for  
 I know the extent of my pleasures; and let it rain or let it be  
 fair weather, it does not disturb my serene mood. This is happi-  
 ness; this is that serene and uninterrupted rest I have long  
 wished for. It is in solitude that the powers concentrate round the  
 soul, and teach it the calm, determined path of virtue and wisdom.  
 Did you not find this—did you not find that the majestic and  
 tranquil mountains impressed deep and tranquil thoughts, and  
 that everything conspired to give a sober temperature of mind more  
 truly delightful and satisfying than the gayest ebullitions of mirth?

"The foaming cataract and tall rock  
 Haunt me like a passion."

Now for a little chatting. I was quite delighted to hear that Papa had at last got £1000.\* Riches seem to fly from genius. I suppose for a month or two you will be easy—pray be cheerful. I begin to think there is no situation without its advantages. You may learn wisdom and fortitude in adversity, and in prosperity you may relieve and soothe. I feel anxious to be wise; to be capable of knowing the best; of following resolutely, however painful, what mature and serious thought may prescribe; and of acquiring a prompt and vigorous judgment and powers capable of execution. What are you reading? Tell Charles, with my best love, that I will never forgive him for having disappointed me of Wordsworth, which I miss very much. Ask him, likewise, to lend me his Coleridge's Poems, which I will take great care of. How is dear Willy? How is every one? If circumstances get easy, don't you think Papa and Mamma will go down to the seaside, to get up their health a little? Write me a very long letter and tell me everything. How is your health? Now, do not be melancholy; for heaven's sake be cheerful; so young in life and so melancholy! The moon shines in at my window; there is a roar of waters and the owls are hooting. How often do I not wish for a curfew "swinging slow with sullen roar"! Pray write to me. Do, there's a good Fanny.

Affectionately yours,

M. J. CLAIRMONT.†

\* This was, doubtless, the £1000 handed over by Shelley to Godwin in April. He had pledged himself to procure for Godwin the sum of £1200, and this sum Sir Timothy included in the reckoning of his son's debts. Through Charles Clairmont (who with Mr. Turner acted as intermediary between Shelley and Godwin) Shelley believed that he had made it clear to Godwin that he could give only £1000 in the spring, and must delay giving the remaining £200 until the autumn, when there would be another settlement with his father. But Clairmont delivered his message erroneously, or failed to deliver it, whence disappointment and remonstrances on Godwin's part, and repeated explanations from Shelley. On January 23, 1816, he wrote to Godwin, "I am sorry that I cannot appeal to my memory for the precise words of the message which you received with the £1000 in the spring [*i.e.* of 1815]. I am certain only that it was not, because I am aware of arrangements made in my own mind by which it could not be, such as you represent Clairmont to have delivered it. My meaning was that you should receive no more than that £1000 until the second settlement with my father, which was then expected in November, and I considered your giving in your debt at £1200 as an accommodation to me, enabling me to procure, as it did, £200 which I should not otherwise have received." The engagement to pay £200 was in 1816 recognized as still in force; the sum was then increased to £300; but circumstances delayed the actual payment for a considerable time.

† At Skinner Street "Clara" was still "Mary Jane."

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"I begin a new journal with our regeneration," Mary wrote on Clara's departure, in May, 1815. Unhappily, the journal from that date onwards for more than twelve months has been lost. Clara's journal, for a still longer period, if she continued to keep this daily register of her doings, is also lost.\* Our materials for the story of Shelley's life from June, 1815, to July of the following year are scanty. Happily, the finer forms and hues and motions of his spirit during the autumnal days of 1815 are reflected for us in the magic mirror of the "Alastor."

Relieved from poverty and the oppression of debt, Shelley longed to escape from London, and settle alone with Mary, in some beautiful solitude—far from the averted faces of former friends—in Wales, or perhaps in Devon. Part of the summer passed in a tour along the south coast of Devon, and in search for a suitable residence. But even amid the loveliness of southern bay, and headland, and chine, and ferny coombe, Shelley's heart reverted fondly to Nantgwillt and to Tremadoc. From Torquay he addressed in June a short letter to Mr. Williams, of Tremadoc, inquiring for a house.

*Shelley to Mr. John Williams.*

At Mrs. Wadling's, Torquay, Devonshire, June 22, 1815.

DEAR WILLIAMS,

I have some idea of visiting Merionethshire again, particularly if I should hear of any house which would afford any probability of suiting me. I write to you therefore to inquire whether there is in any remote and solitary situation a house to let for a time, with the prospect of purchase when my affairs will permit. I did not ask Mr. Nanney the terms of Dolmgleneyx; perhaps you can inform me of them. I assure you that it was not without much inconvenience that I paid the bond of £100. I would, if possible, have relieved you from the whole, but I have no hesitation in promising a final arrangement in the autumn.

\* Clara's journal begins again on January 17, 1818, at Marlow. Some pages are torn from the beginning of the manuscript book, and on a blank leaf is written August, 1816.

It will not suit me to purchase any house at present, but should the solitude and beauty of any place you can recommend or obtain for me induce me to wish to make it my permanent residence, I should have the command of money in the winter sufficient to enable me to possess it; still it best accords with my purpose to try at first.

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Yours truly,  
P. B. SHELLEY.

A month later Shelley was alone, house-hunting, and Mary was now at Clifton. August 4, Shelley's birthday, was drawing near, and Mary's heart was filled with longing for his presence on that day. Could Clara in her Lynmouth cottage have heard that Shelley was in South Devon? and if so, might she not have taken it into her head to start off and join him? Such a possibility was not to be contemplated with patience. And was it not right that Shelley should be with "the own Maie" to receive his birthday present from her hands? With little tender words, that were caresses, and pet names, Mary wrote to Shelley, entreating that their severance should be at an end. Of these little playful names one, which could serve as noun or adjective, we cannot explain. Why Mary was "Pecksie" must remain a Shelleyan mystery; nor can we throw light on the incident of the Dormouse and the brooch.\* If Mary was "Pecksie," Shelley became for her the "Elfin Knight," under which name the author of the "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" was afterwards veiled in the announcement of that poem in Leigh Hunt's *Examiner*. The two love-names appear in playful conjunction on a blank space at the end of the first volume of the manuscript journal, where Mary had noted for her private use the items of some simple recipe, and Shelley, not without a smile at his own former interest in romantic horrors, adds a ghastly parody of Mary's prescription, drawn from the pharmacopœia of the land of ghouls.

\* Possibly "Pecksie" has some connection with the Pecksy of Mrs. Trimmer's "History of the Robins."

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"[In Mary's handwriting.] A tablespoonful of the spirit of aniseed, with a small quantity of spermaceti.

"[In Shelley's.] 9 drops of human blood, 7 grains of gunpowder,  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz. of putrified brain, 13 mashed grave-worms—the Pecksie's doom salve. The Maie and her Elfin Knight."

The Maie's letter from Clifton to her vanished Knight of Elfland ran as follows:—

*Mary to Shelley.*

Clifton, July 27, 1815.

MY BELOVED SHELLEY,

What I am now going to say is not a freak from a fit of low spirits, but it is what I earnestly entreat you to attend to and comply with.

We ought not to be absent any longer; indeed, we ought not. I am not happy at it. When I retire to my room, no sweet love; after dinner, no Shelley; though I have heaps of things *very particular* to say; in fine, either you must come back, or I must come to you directly. You will say, shall we neglect taking a house—a dear home? No, my love, I would not for worlds give up that; but I know what *seeking* for a house is, and, trust me, it is a very, *very* long job, too long for one love to undertake in the absence of the other. Dearest, I know how it will be; we shall both of us be put off, day after day, with the hopes of the success of the next day's search, for I am frightened to think how long. Do you not see it in this light, my own love? We have been now a long time separated, and a house is not yet in sight; and even if you should fix on one, which I do not hope for in less than a week, then the settling, etc. Indeed, my love, I cannot bear to remain so long without you; so, if you will not give me leave, expect me without it some day; and indeed, it is very likely that you may, for I am quite sick of passing day after day in this hopeless way.

Pray, is Clara with you? for I have inquired several times, and no letters; but, seriously, it would not in the least surprise me (if you have written to her from London, and let her know that you are without me) that she should have taken some such freak.

The Dormouse has hid the brooch; and, pray, why am I for ever and ever to be denied the sight of my case? Have you got it in your own possession? or where is it? It would give me very

great pleasure if you would send it me. I hope you have not already appropriated it, for if you have I shall think it un-  
 Pecksie of you, as Maie was to give it you with her own hands on your birthday; but it is of little consequence, for I have no hope of seeing you on that day; but I am mistaken, for I have hope and certainty, for if you are not here on or before the 3rd of August, I set off on the 4th, in early coach, so as to be with you on the evening of that dear day at least.

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To-morrow is the 28th of July.\* Dearest, ought we not to have been together on that day? Indeed we ought, my love, as I shall shed some tears to think we are not. Do not be angry, dear love; your Pecksie is a good girl, and is quite well now again, except a headache, when she waits so anxiously for her love's letters.

Dearest, best Shelley, pray come to me; pray, pray, do not stay away from me! This is delightful weather, and, you better, we might have a delightful excursion to Tintern Abbey. My dear, dear love, I most earnestly and with tearful eyes beg that I may come to you, if you do not like to leave the searches after a house.

It is a long time to wait, even for an answer. To-morrow may bring you news, but I have no hope, for you only set off to look after one in the afternoon, and what can be done at that hour of the day?

It is almost certain that Mary's wish had its fulfilment, and that she and Shelley met at Clifton before August 4.† In that month a resting-place at length was found by them, but it was neither in Merionethshire nor Devon. On the borders of Windsor Park, at Bishopsgate,‡ the eastern entrance of the park, in a furnished house, Shelley and Mary were once more together, and alone. To one who had been an Eton boy, and at a later time a resident at Bracknell, the ground was doubtless familiar. Its umbrageous solitudes, tenanted only by gentle woodland creatures, whose eyes never looked offence,

\* The anniversary of their flight to Dover.

† In July, 1816, Shelley wrote from Geneva to Longdill to give up possession of the house at Bishopsgate on August 3. We may suppose that a year's tenancy expired on that day, and that in the week's interval between July 27 (the date of Mary's letter) and August 3, 1815, the house had been found.

‡ Mrs. Shelley and Peacock prefer the form of the name "Bishopgate," but "Bishopsgate" appears on maps of authority.

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were dear to him for meditation and repose; and at no great distance was the river, to which during his entire life in England—at Eton, at Oxford, at Marlow—his flights reverted and clung like the rapid wheelings of a swallow. Nor were he and Mary quite without companionship, for Peacock, then residing at Marlow, would often walk over, and become for a while their guest. The August days that year were golden, a favourable season for pasture-land and corn-crop; and when a shower had fallen, clear breezy hours bore away the moisture, and the sky again was blue. The river-navigation of the Reuss and Rhine, just twelve months since, had delighted Shelley, and the memory of it now quickened in his imagination, making him long for a new experience of like enjoyment. Since his return from the Continent he had read aloud to Mary his favourite “*Thalaba*,” and in fancy had been companion of the young Arabian wanderer in his voyage upon a stream more like the sylvan Thames, that now lay near, than the Rhine or Reuss.

“The little boat moved on.  
Through pleasant banks the quiet stream  
Went winding pleasantly;  
By fragrant fir-groves now it past,  
And now through alder-shores,  
Through green and fertile meadows now  
It silently ran by.  
The flag-flower blossom’d on its side,  
The willow-tresses waved,  
The flowing current furrow’d round  
The water-lily’s floating leaf.” \*

Why should not some days of this delightful season be spent in rowing towards the source of the Thames? Peacock would take an oar; so, in his turn, would Charles Clairmont; Mary should sit at the wherry’s end, presiding over her chief boat-

\* “*Thalaba*,” bk. xi. 34. Mrs. Shelley writes, “The river-navigation [of the Reuss and Rhine] delighted Shelley. In his favourite poem of ‘*Thalaba*’ his imagination had been excited by a description of such a voyage.”

man's delightful toil. The project happily conceived was executed as happily. From Old Windsor, just as August reached its close, the party started. It is not easy to imagine a more enchanting river-excursion, undisturbed by the sense of danger or of sublimity in landscape, than the ascent of our chief English river with sail or oar; nor could any season of the year be more fortunate for such an excursion than the early days of September, when the enervating heats of summer have departed, and the spiritual calm and clearness of early autumn, purified by a sense of the frailty of beauty, are still untouched by grief for fair things lost. Five years before, Peacock had celebrated in a poem the glories of the Thames; now, its beauty was to sink into a heart more open than his to all rare and exquisite impressions of loveliness. An endless train of gracious forms of nature and animated pictures of human life went by the voyagers, as they curved from sweep to sweep of the river; downs, or chalk cliff, or wooded height, or lawn with its noble trees standing above their shadows, and some stately mansion embosomed in their midst; or level meadows where the cattle could step to the water-edge, or the angler cast his fly; the old mill, or rustic inn with its ferry; the rushing weir, the lock, and the lockman's cottage; the grey church-tower, and high-arched bridge, and humming village or market-town; the islets, clustered or alone, with rushy border, and alder or willow or osier stirred by the river breeze; the swan oaring her way, the moor-hen at pretty antics, or—a flash of blue and green—the kingfisher in flight; and now some old manorial court or hall, or ruined abbey; and now the spires of Oxford rising or sinking in the distance. From Oxford Shelley did not avert his gaze; accompanied by Mary, he once again made acquaintance with the quadrangle of University College, which he had paced up and down, defiant, on the morning of his expulsion, and with the staircase which had so often resounded to his hasty tread in the winter nights, while Hogg listened from above. The Thames excur-

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 XII. boat had reached shallows near the river-head, where, says  
 Jan. 1815- Peacock, "the cattle stood entirely across the stream, with the  
 May, 1816. water scarcely covering their hoofs." Shelley's fancy had now  
 taken wing, and it would have pleased him to explore, by  
 river and canal and lake, wild Wales and northern England,  
 and the regions of Firth and Tweed. Perhaps it was fortunate  
 that money, that "huge evil," barred the way, or the  
 force which, that autumn, created "Alastor" might have been  
 transmuted into the tugging of an oar. To Charles Clairmont  
 we owe the fullest record of the Thames voyage, set  
 down for his sister's amusement, in a letter written at Bishops-  
 gate after the voyagers' return home.

*Charles Clairmont to Clara Clairmont.*

Bishopsgate, September 16, 1815.

Now, dear Jane, I shall give you some account of any interesting circumstances that have befallen me during this period in which I have been disappointed of meeting you. I passed two or three weeks, after you went away, in Skinner Street, as pleasantly as might be under the circumstances, and I left them all there, on very kind terms, to come and spend a week with Shelley and Mary at Bishopsgate. For, several days previous to this, Shelley had told me he was afraid it would be impossible for him to spare sufficient money to enable me to take you with me to Enniscorthy, but that was not decided, for he was then endeavouring to obtain a sum of money.

Peacock was here when I came; with him I was a good deal pleased from the first; I am so still, and should have been more so if Shelley had not prejudiced me. He seems an idly-inclined man; indeed, he is professedly so in the summer; he owns he cannot apply himself to study, and thinks it more beneficial to him, as a human being, entirely to devote himself to the beauties of the season while they last; he was only happy while out from morning till night. I readily joined him in his daily excursions. Peacock is perfectly acquainted with this part of the country; he has lived here the chief part of his life.

\* \* \* \* \*

We passed by many little villages, and one or two large towns—the most considerable were Reading and Oxford. At the latter we arrived about seven in the evening, and stopped till four the next day. We spent the next morning in a more intimate investigation of the beauties of the architecture and the shape and situation of the town. We saw the Bodleian Library, the Clarendon Press, and walked through the quadrangles of the different colleges. We visited the very rooms where the two noted infidels, Shelley and Hogg (now, happily, excluded the society of the present residents), pored, with the incessant and unwearied application of the alchymist, over the certified and natural boundaries of human knowledge. Having left Oxford, we proceeded onward, and in a day or two to Lechlade, the last town on the river-side, and about fourteen miles from the source of the Thames. We had in the course of our voyage conceived the scheme of not stopping here, but, by going along a canal which here joins the Thames, to get into the Severn, and so also follow up that river to its source. Shelley even proposed, in his wildness, that there should be no halting-place even there; he even proposed, by the help of divers canals and rivers, to leave North Wales, and, traversing the inland counties, to reach Durham and the Lakes, so on to the Tweed, and hence to come out on the Forth, nor rest till we reached the Falls of the Clyde, when by the time we returned we should have voyaged two thousand miles. However, all this airy scheme was soon laid aside, for the Commissioners would not allow us to pass the Severn Canal under £20. This was out of the question; so, having satisfied ourselves on these points, we determined at least to draw our boat up to the very spring of the Thames before we returned. We made a most bold endeavour at this last project; but, by the time we got three miles above Lechlade, the weeds became so enormously thick and high, that all three of us tugging could not move the boat an inch; the water also, a little further on, was so shallow that it barely covered the hoofs of some cows standing in the middle to drink. Quite scared by this sight, we turned round, and passed the rest of the day at Lechlade. Next morning at six we commenced our homeward course, and in about four days reached Windsor again, much delighted by our excursion, but heartily tired of its length. We have all felt the good effects of this jaunt, but in Shelley the change is quite remarkable; he

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CHAP. has now the ruddy, healthy complexion of the autumn upon his  
XII. countenance, and he is twice as fat as he used to be."

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Peacock's testimony confirms that of Charles Clairmont as to the surprising improvement effected in Shelley's health by the few days of life upon the water. Part of this change Peacock was inclined to ascribe less to his open-air existence than to the fact that Shelley on this occasion fell from his half-spiritual height of vegetarianism and tasted flesh again. "He had been living chiefly on tea and bread and butter, drinking occasionally a sort of spurious lemonade, made of some powder in a box, which, as he was reading at the time the 'Tale of a Tub,' he called the *powder of pimperlimpimp*." Peacock's prescription of peppered mutton-chops wrought kindly on him, bringing back the wholesome heat to his blood. "He lived in my way," writes his amateur physician, "for the rest of our expedition, rowed vigorously, was cheerful, merry, overflowing with animal spirits, and had certainly one week of thorough enjoyment of his life."

With calm and health and freedom from disintegrating cares, Shelley's higher and truer self expanded. The poet within him wakened from the oppression and the trance, and, when he now stood erect, his stature was that of manhood. The voice in which his spirit uttered itself was no longer a boyish treble or the broken voice of a youth; it had the fulness and purity of early adult years, with some of the violin's lyric intensity. The happiness and calm had, however, followed hard upon a season of pain, and disappointment, and melancholy foreboding. Already at twenty-three Shelley was disillusioned of some eager and exorbitant hopes; the first great experiment of his heart had proved a failure; his boyish ardour for the enfranchisement of a people had been without result; his literary efforts had met with little sympathy or recognition; and, during the early months of the year, he had felt how frail was his hold on life, and had

almost confronted that mystery which lies behind the veil of mortal existence. Therefore if now he sang, there must needs be something of exalted pain and melancholy wisdom mingled with the rapture of his song. In the midst of his vigorous rowing-enjoyment and the abounding animal spirits, of which Peacock tells us, he had mused on death, while the stars came out above the lessening spire and the dim graves of Lechlade Churchyard.

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“ Thus solemnized and softened, death is mild  
And terrorless as this serenest night :  
Here could I hope, like some inquiring child  
Sporting on graves, that death did hide from human sight  
Sweet secrets, or beside its breathless sleep  
That loveliest dreams perpetual watch did keep.”

And later, as he wandered alone in the glades of Windsor Great Park, now when in still autumnal mornings the foliage was brightening to decay, or when the autumnal winds drove to east or west the leaves of chestnut and elm and oak, his thoughts had in them some of the breadth and solemnity of the season of the year. “Alastor” is an imaginative rendering of the mood which came upon him on his return to Bishopsgate, an interpretation of his past experiences and of the lore that he had gathered from life, and a record, marvellously exalted and enhanced, of all the impressions derived from external nature during the past year—from snowy mountain and valley of Switzerland, from the arrowy Reuss and rock-guarded passes of the Rhine, from the gentler loveliness of our English river, and the solemn woodland glories of Windsor. In its inmost sense the poem is a pleading on behalf of human love. This, which had now been found by Shelley, he might have sought for ever and in vain, and then his fate would have been that of the solitary dreamer in “Alastor ;” but when he returned from lonely musings under the Windsor oaks to his home, it was to look

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into Mary's "redeeming eyes,"\* and to find a place of rest in Mary's faithful heart. Three years after "Alastor" was conceived, Shelley, when in Italy, wrote of his wife as the "dear friend with whom added years of intercourse only add to my apprehension of its value, and who would have had more right than any other one to complain that she has not been able to extinguish in me the very power of delineating sadness." In 1815, though he had not yet estimated to the full the preciousness of her love, its nearness quickened his conception of the wasting pain of one who, having long neglected or scorned the natural sympathies of the heart, is suddenly overmastered by a tyrannous need of love, and at the same time is disqualified for ever finding satisfaction for his ideal aspiration and desire. Shelley in "Alastor" would rebuke the seeker for beauty and seeker for truth, however high-minded, who attempts to exist without human sympathy, and he would rebuke the ever-unsatisfied idealist in his own heart. Yet, at the same time, he would exhibit the advantage possessed by such an one over the worldling, blind and torpid; for the very fact that he is punished by an avenging fate, and thirsts for love, and dies because he cannot find it, constitutes his purification and redemption; and as he rests with languid head upon the ivied stone, gazing westwards at the great moon and about to resign his being to the universal frame of things,

"Hope and despair,

The torturers, slept; no mortal pain or fear  
Marred his repose; "

and he lies "breathing there at peace and faintly smiling." Better this, Shelley would say, than to fatten in a loveless lethargy, "deluded by no generous error, instigated by no sacred thirst of doubtful knowledge, duped by no illustrious superstition, loving nothing on the earth and cherishing no hopes beyond." Such are, indeed, already morally dead.

\* Shelley to Mary, in a letter already given.

"They are neither friends, nor lovers, nor fathers, nor citizens of the world, nor benefactors of their country. Among those who attempt to exist without human sympathy, the pure and tender-hearted perish through the intensity and passion of their search after its communities, when the vacancy of their spirit suddenly makes itself felt. All else, selfish, blind, and torpid, are those unforeseeing multitudes, who constitute, together with their own, the lasting misery and loneliness of the world." \* "Alastor" has been described as hectic and unhealthy in sentiment; in truth, it was the product of calm and happy hours, and the mood which it expresses is one of high, sad sanity. Its influencings upon us are like those of the autumnal wind, not joyous but pure and spiritual, enlarging the horizons and revealing to us the boundaries of hope and joy.

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"Your letter," wrote Shelley to Hogg, shortly after his return to Bishopsgate, "has lain by me for the last week, reproaching me every day. I found it on my return from a water excursion on the Thames, the particulars of which will have been recounted in another letter. The exercise and dissipation of mind attached to such an expedition have produced so favourable an effect upon my health, that my habitual dejection and irritability have almost deserted me, and I can devote six hours of the day to study without difficulty. I have been engaged lately in the commencement of several literary plans, which, if my present temper of mind endures, I shall probably complete in the winter. I have consequently deserted Cicero, or proceed but slowly with his philosophic dialogues. I have read the Oration for the poet Archias, and am only disappointed with its brevity.

"I have been induced by one of the subjects which I am now pursuing to consult Bayle. I think he betrays great obliquity of understanding and coarseness of feeling. I have also read the four first books of Lucan's 'Pharsalia,' a poem,

\* Preface to "Alastor."

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 XII. Virgil. Mary has finished the fifth book of the 'Æneid,' and  
 Jan. 1815- her progress in Latin is such as to satisfy my best expecta-  
 May, 1816. tions.

"The east wind—the wind of autumn—is abroad, and even now the leaves of the forest are shattered at every gust. When may we expect you? September is almost passed, and October, the month of your promised return, is at hand, when we shall be happy to welcome you again to our fireside.

"No events, as you know, disturb our tranquility."

Among the literary plans to which Shelley in this letter alludes, were a series of speculations on metaphysics, of which some fragments were written and remain to us, and a little treatise—also represented by a few fragments—on the elementary principles of morals. These, with the reflections "On Love," embodying some of the same thought and sentiment which found expression in "Alastor," and the reflections, still more remarkable, "On Life," show how far Shelley had moved from the position which he once occupied as a disciple of the materialistic philosophers of the French Illumination.\* But of more worth than any philosophical reasonings of Shelley, is the poet's religious awe with which he contemplates the mysteries of human life and death, renewing for us the sense of that unrealized world of perpetual miracle in which we move, and of that unknowable somewhat which lies behind and beyond the known. True and vivid is also his apprehension of the community and harmony which subsist between mind and the spiritual Presence in nature. "In the motion of the very leaves of spring, in the blue air, there is then found a secret correspondence with our heart. There is eloquence in the tongueless wind, and a melody in the flowing brooks and

\* It may be, however, that the fragments on Life and on Love are of later date. That "On Life" I should be inclined to assign to the year 1819. A copy of it in Shelley's handwriting occupies part of the note-book—evidently an Italian note-book—which contains his "Philosophical View of Reform." Mr. Rossetti assigns it to the year 1815.

the rustling of the reeds beside them, which, by their inconceivable relation to something within the soul, awaken the spirits to a dance of breathless rapture, and bring tears of mysterious tenderness to the eyes, like the enthusiasm of patriotic success, or the voice of one beloved singing to you alone." \*

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It is as a poet, no less than as a moralist, that Shelley, writing of ethics, urges that man is "not a moral, and an intellectual, but also, and pre-eminently, an imaginative being." "Imagination, or mind employed in prophetically imaging forth its objects, is that faculty of human nature on which every gradation of its progress, nay, every, the minutest, change, depends; . . . disinterested benevolence is the product of a cultivated imagination, and has an intimate connection with all the arts which add ornament, or dignity, or power, or stability to the social state of man." † And it is as a poet that he conceives and images forth the difficulty which attends the analysis of our own mind. "Thought can with difficulty visit the intricate and winding chambers which it inhabits. It is like a river whose rapid and perpetual stream flows outwards; like one in dread who speeds through the recesses of some haunted pile, and dares not look behind. . . . If the passage from sensation to reflection, from a state of passive perception to voluntary contemplation, were not so dizzying and so tumultuous, this attempt would be less difficult." If such writing as this adds little to our knowledge, it does what is more important, awakening us to feel anew the wonder and the freshness of the universe, and to recognize its grave, harmonious purport, until, beholding the masque of our globe and its presenters, we exclaim with Ferdinand—

"This is a most majestic vision, and  
Harmonious charmingly. May I be bold  
To think these spirits?"

\* "On Love."

† "Speculations on Metaphysics," and "Speculations on Morals."



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The months at Bishopsgate went by calmly and quietly. During the winter Peacock often came from Marlow, and Hogg often walked down from London. These were Shelley's only visitors. "One or two persons called on him," writes Peacock, "but they were not to his mind, and were not encouraged to reappear." The only exception was the Quaker, Dr. Pope, of Staines. This worthy old gentleman "liked to discuss theology with Shelley. Shelley at first avoided the discussion, saying his opinions would not be to the doctor's taste; but the doctor answered, 'I like to hear thee talk, friend Shelley; I see thou art very deep.'" Perhaps it was to confute the friendly doctor that Shelley plunged into the "History of Arianism." For the rest, his studies were exclusively, or almost exclusively, Greek—Theocritus, Moschus, Homer, the "Prometheus" of Æschylus, Lucian, Herodotus, Thucydides. The winter, as Hogg expressed it, was a mere Atticism.

The opening months of 1816 were not uneventful. On January 24 Mary gave birth to a boy—beloved of his parents, and a centre of hope and joy during a few years; beloved in memory and mourned for ever when those few years had fled—to whom the name of William, that of Mary's father, was given. In March the little volume containing "Alastor" was published, and evidence that a great poet had arisen in England (evidence slow indeed to produce its true effect) was before the world. To Southey, his former friend and kind entertainer at Keswick, Shelley was moved to send a copy of the slender octavo which contained his first published verse since their meeting. "I cannot refrain from presenting you," he wrote, "with a little poem, the product of a few serene hours of the last beautiful autumn. I shall never forget the pleasure which I derived from your conversation, or the kindness with which I was received in your hospitable circle during the short period of my stay in Cumberland some years ago. The disappointment of some youthful hopes, and subsequent misfortunes of a heavier nature, are all that I can plead as my

excuse for neglecting to write to you, as I had promised, from Ireland. The true weight of this apology you cannot know. CHAP.  
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 Let it be sufficient that, regarding you with admiration as a Jan. 1815-  
 poet and with respect as a man, I send you, as an intimation May, 1816.  
 of those sentiments, my first serious attempt to interest the best  
 feelings of the human heart, believing that you have so much  
 general charity as to forget, like me, how widely in moral and  
 political opinions we disagree, and to attribute that difference  
 to better motives than the multitude are disposed to allege as  
 the cause of dissent from their institutions." \*

While Shelley was thus occupied with study and authorship and domestic joys, the negotiations with his father for the sale of his reversion and a division of the family property dragged on their weary length. These proceedings were probably watched by Shelley with less anxiety than that which Godwin felt in their issue, for the sum of one thousand pounds which he had received from Shelley in April of the preceding year was soon devoured by the pack of hungry creditors, and they were again in full pursuit. Still Godwin, an indignant moralist, refused to see Shelley's face or to take his hand, and still he petitioned for Shelley's money. While the settlement with his father was pending, to obtain money on *post-obits* or by the sale of reversions was impossible; it must, therefore, be raised by loans, with greater difficulty and on harder terms. To Shelley, who had taken Mary Godwin to himself, for better for worse, till death should part him and her; to whom, as he afterwards wrote, "it was matter of the deepest grief" that he was by the law rendered incapable "of exhibiting to the world, according to those formalities which the world requires," that his preference for Mary "arose from no light or frivolous attachment;" † who was now living regularly and quietly in his country home;—to Shelley it seemed strange that Godwin,

\* The letter is dated "Messrs. Longdill and Co., 5, Gray's Inn Square, March 7, 1816."

† Draft of Shelley's Chancery paper, in his own handwriting.

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whose earlier views on marriage had helped to determine his own, should treat him as if he were a common seducer; and it strained his feeling of respect for his former guide and master to perceive that, while Godwin refused to enter into any relations with him of kindness or of common benevolence, he was ready enough to enter into relations tending to his own personal advantage at Shelley's risk and loss. Kindness without approbation, Godwin replied, would not be accepted by Shelley, and torture could not wring from him approbation of the act which had separated them.\* Therefore their communications must be of a merely business nature. "I return your cheque," Godwin wrote, preserving a point of honour with something like the pedantry of virtue, "because no consideration can induce me to utter a cheque drawn by you and containing my name. To what purpose make a disclosure of this kind to your banker? I hope you will send a duplicate of it by the post which will reach me on Saturday morning. You may make it payable to Joseph Hume or James Martin, or any other name in the whole directory. I should prefer its being payable to Mr. Hume."† We can hardly wonder that Shelley, who was composed of human, not angelic, elements, and had the passions of a man, should once or twice have allowed his indignation to have its way. "I knew," Godwin wrote to his wife three years later, "that Shelley's temper was occasionally fiery, resentful, and indignant." This is true; yet his desire to benefit Godwin was constant, and was shown by the sacrifice, not alone of his money, but of time and repose of mind; and if, now and again, wrathful words broke forth, he quickly recovered his natural gentleness of temper, and sought by expressions of regret and goodwill to undo the ill—if ill it was—which he had wrought.

During the early months of 1816 frequent letters were

\* Godwin to Shelley, March 7, 1816.

† Letter copied by Fanny Godwin, and undated. It has been referred—erroneously, I believe—to the autumn of 1814.

exchanged between Godwin and Shelley. The strict limits imposed on the communications, and the constraint under which Shelley wrote, deprive his letters of a great part of the interest which they would otherwise have possessed. Yet they are valuable as exhibiting his business faculty and his mastery of practical details; they contain passages of importance, revealing how keenly he suffered from the alienation, or contempt and hatred of his fellows, among whom were some former friends or acquaintances. They exhibit in part the motives which induced him to seek a home on the Continent, and they render sufficiently clear the progress of the weary negotiations with his father, which were finally brought to a fruitless close by the advice of high legal authorities, confirmed by the decision of the Court of Chancery. That the poet of "Alastor" was no mere transcendental dreamer, but a man who could at will grasp and deal with a handful of prosaic facts, the following letter may serve to show.

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*Shelley to Godwin.*

Bishopgate, January 7, 1816.\*

SIR,

I will endeavour to give you as clear as possible a history of the proceedings between myself and my father.

A small portion of the estates to which I am entitled in reversion were comprehended in the will of Mr. John Shelley, my great-uncle, and devised to the same uses as the larger portion which was settled on my father's marriage jointly by my grandfather and father. This portion was valued at £18,000, which my father purchased of me with an equivalent of £11,000. I signed on this occasion two deeds; the one was to empower my attorney to suffer what is called a recovery, the other a counterpart of the deed of conveyance.

Before these transactions, however, and at the very commencement of our negotiations, I signed a deed which was the preliminary and the basis of the whole business. My grandfather had

\* Writing in the opening days of the new year, Shelley has erroneously set down the date "1815."

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left me the option of receiving a life estate in some very large sum (I think £140,000) on condition that I would prolong the entail, so as to possess only a life estate in my original patrimony. These conditions I never intended to accept, although Longdill [Shelley's solicitor] considered them very favourable to me, and urged me by all means to grasp at the offer. It was my father's interest and wish that I should refuse the conditions, because my younger brother would inherit, in default of my compliance with them, this life estate. Longdill and Whitton \* therefore made an agreement that I should resign my rights to this property, and that my father, in exchange for this concession, should give me the full price of my reversion. In compliance with the terms of this agreement, I signed a deed importing that I disclaimed my grandfather's property. My father did not sign his part of the agreement, because he could not do so without forfeiting the new entail, which says that whoever in whatsoever manner endeavours to break through the intentions of the testator shall not enjoy the fortune; but Mr. Whitton engaged tacitly to Longdill that my father would buy the reversion on the terms already settled.

Now, Whitton professes my father's willingness to proceed, but urges every consideration calculated to delay the progress of the affair. Longdill told me that he saw Whitton wished to procure as much delay as possible, but that he still thought it was their intention not entirely to give up the negotiation. Whether both Whitton and Longdill are not quietly making their advantage out of the inexperience and credulity of myself and my father is a doubt that has crossed my mind.

You say that you will receive no more than £1250 for the payment of those encumbrances from which you think I may be considered as *specially* bound to relieve you. I would not desire to persuade you to sell the approbation of your friends for the difference between this sum and that which your necessities actually require, but the mention of your friends has suggested a plan to my mind which possibly you may be able to execute. You have undoubtedly some well-wishers who, although they would refuse to give you so large a sum as £1200, might not refuse to lend it you on security which they might consider as unexceptionable. I think you could lay before any rich friend such a

\* Whitton was Sir Timothy Shelley's solicitor.

statement of your case as that, if he could refuse to lend £1200 on my security, his desire of benefiting you must be exceedingly slight. There is every probability in favour of the arrangement with my father being completed within the year. I can give evidence of the existence of the negotiation between us. If this prospect should fail, I still remain heir to property of £6000 or £7000 a year. Why not ask Grattan, or Mackintosh, or Lord Holland, whom I have heard named as your . . . [*The rest of the letter is wanting*].

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A few days later Shelley had agreed to sell an annuity for Godwin's benefit. It was important that the matter should be kept private, otherwise, wrote Shelley,\* "I might destroy Longdill's [his solicitor's] confidence in the *regularity* and prudence of my conduct at a time when perhaps the whole success of the affair with my father depends on its preservation." "I consent," he wrote on January 18, "to sell an annuity which shall produce enough to cover Hogan's demand, on these conditions :

"That you should agree to pay the interest until I am able to discharge the principal. I shall take your word for the fulfilment of this part of the contract.

"That entire secrecy should be observed. It will be necessary that the solicitor who engages in the management of the affair should defer registering the annuity for judgment for the period of a year."

But Shelley, while desirous to serve Godwin, protested against the lofty tone in which the obligation was requested :—

"Perhaps it is well that you should be informed that I consider your last letter to be written in a style of haughtiness and encroachment, which neither awes nor imposes on me; but I have no desire to transgress the limits which you place to our intercourse, nor in any future instance will I make any remarks but such as arise from the strict question in discussion. Perhaps you do well to consider every word irrelevant

\* Bishopgate, January 25, 1816.

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to that question which does not regard your present advantage.\*

Godwin's "explanation" can be gathered from the reply of Shelley in a letter of January 21:—

"I accept and thank you for your explanation. If you really think me vicious, such haughtiness as I imputed to you is perhaps to be excused. But I, who do not agree with you in that opinion, cannot be expected to endure it without remonstrance. I can easily imagine how difficult it must be, in addressing a person whom we despise or dislike, to abstain from phrases, the turn of which is peculiar to the sentiments with which we cannot avoid regarding such a person. Perhaps I did wrong to feel so deeply or notice so readily a spirit of which you seem to have been unconscious."

However Shelley might resent Godwin's manner of conducting the correspondence, his goodwill was firm, and should be shown by his acts:—

"[January 23.] I am most undoubtedly in earnest, as much so as I should have been last November, had such explanations been made as I have since received, and the same spirit of promptitude shown to share with me the burthens incident to the pecuniary difficulties with which I have been so long surrounded."

He was even willing to consent to an interview with Godwin, however painful such an interview might be, if it were considered desirable in his interest:—

"[January 25.] I will spare no pains or any danger which it is not evident ruin to incur but that you shall have the money in March. If Hayward [an attorney] fails, do not fear an ultimate failure. I am persuaded that my situation is now widely different and far more commanding and respectable than when I with difficulty procured money to live. . . . I should come to town willingly on the business of this loan, when it appears that my presence is required. If Hayward

\* Bishopgate, January 18, 1815.

eventually refuses to negotiate it for us, then I certainly think some personal discussion is needed. I could perhaps then make clear to you the reasonableness of my reluctance to apply to Longdill. But I shall leave this subject henceforth entirely to your own feelings. Probably my feelings on such an occasion would not be less distressing than your own. So far as those feelings are concerned, I should certainly reluctantly entertain the idea of such an interview. But I would not sacrifice anything essential to the raising of this money to exempt myself from the sensations, however painful, which could not fail to arise on meeting a man, who, having been once my friend, would receive me with cold looks and haughty words.

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"Fanny and Mrs. Godwin will probably be glad to hear that Mary has safely recovered from a very favourable confinement, and that her child is well."

The interview did not take place; legal delays and difficulties interposed between Shelley's desire to assist Godwin and the accomplishment of that desire, and before February had passed, Shelley had thoughts of bidding farewell to England, and settling in Italy. The negotiation with his father meanwhile had received a sudden and disastrous check.

*Shelley to Godwin.*

6, Garden Court, Temple, February 16, 1816.

SIR,

In the course of a few weeks I shall certainly leave the neighbourhood of London, and possibly even execute my design of settling in Italy. I have felt it necessary to decide on some such measure in consequence of an event which I fear will make even a more calamitous change in your prospects.

It is the opinion of the lawyers that my father ought not to complete the intended affair with me, and that he cannot arrange any other. If you do not feel it necessary to explain with me in person on this subject, I can state the detail in a letter. Such, however, is the bare fact.

The impossibility of effecting anything by post-obit or sale of



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reversion has been already adverted to by me. I am far from retracting any engagement made for your benefit, but I cannot refrain from suspecting under these new circumstances how far I am justified, even by my sincere zeal for your interest, in signing the deed which Hayward informs me is in progress. You will believe that I am the more disinterested in what I say when I inform you that my own difficulties, suspended by the intended settlement, now come upon me with tenfold weight, so that I have every prospect of wanting money for my domestic expenditure.

I intended to have left town at two o'clock to-morrow; I will not do so, if you wish to see me. In that latter case, send a letter *by a porter* to Mr. Hogg's, 7, Garden Court, Temple, making your own appointment.

Yet I do not know that it is best for you to see me. On me it would inflict deep dejection. But I would not refuse anything which I can do, so that I may tempt a man whom, in spite of his wrongs to me, I respect and love.

Besides, I shall certainly not delay to depart from the haunts of men. Your interests may suffer from your own fastidiousness; they shall not be injured by my wayward hopes and disappointments.

I shall write to you by Sunday's post if I receive no answer to this letter.

Jane, of course, is with you. She is uninformed as to the latest and most decisive particulars relating to the overthrow of my hopes.

P. B. SHELLEY.

Friday night.

A note written next day, before Shelley left town, reassured Godwin as to his willingness to sign the deed prepared by Hayward; but when he wrote again from Bishopsgate, there was no good news to tell of the progress of the arrangement with Sir Timothy.

"[February 18.] I promised you further details by this post on the subject of the affair with my father. It is the opinion of the most eminent lawyers that my father cannot become a party to the projected arrangement without forfeiting the property devised by my grandfather's will. In consequence of this opinion, and for the purpose of ascertaining

some other points not necessarily connected with my immediate interest, they recommend a suit in Chancery. They are desirous that their own opinion, however well founded, should be confronted with the Lord Chancellor's. . . . I understand that the existence of two or three words in the will occasions this most unexpected change. The words are these — 'for the time being,' and the application of which words to the present case is explained to be, that in case my father should survive myself and my infant son, my younger brother at the expiration of his minority might require my father to fulfil those conditions of the will, which he would incapacitate himself from fulfilling by cutting off the entail.

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"It is altogether a most complex affair, the words of the will being equivocal to a singular degree. A new difficulty arises also from the import of my signature to the deed of disclaimer, as it is called, given on the presumption of the completion of this settlement. One thing alone is certain, that until my father's death I shall receive no portion of the estate.

"How does this information affect your prospects? Does anything remain to be done by me? You have entire knowledge of my resources, my situation, and my dispositions towards you. What do you think I can do, or I ought to do to set you free?"

The prospect of Shelley's departure from England struck alarm into Godwin; though he could not take Shelley's hand in friendship, it was desirable that hands which held the vile trash and rascal counters of gold should not be wholly out of reach. Shelley hastened to set his mind at rest, and at the same time took occasion to explain some of the motives which induced him to seek residence in a foreign land.

*Shelley to Godwin.*

Bishopgate, February 21, 1816.

SIR,

I saw Turner yesterday, who engaged to convey to you by that night's post a reassurance on the points which he called on

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me to ascertain. I should have written to you myself if I had not returned too late from a long walk with Turner, in which I endeavoured to make him understand as clearly as possible the present state of my affairs and my dispositions towards you.

I shall certainly not leave this country, or even remove to a greater distance from the neighbourhood of London, until the unfavourable aspect assumed by my affairs shall appear to be unalterable, or until all has been done by me which it is possible for me to do for the relief of yours. This was my intention from the moment that I first received an intimation of the change. I wrote to you for the purpose of giving you an opportunity of making my assistance as available to you as possible before I departed.

When I wrote to you from London I certainly was more firmly persuaded than now of the inefficacy of any further attempt for the settlement of my affairs. You have suggested a view of the question that makes me pause. At all events I shall remain here, or in this neighbourhood, for the present, and hold myself in readiness to do my utmost towards advancing you the money.

You are perhaps aware that one of the chief motives which strongly urges me either to desert my native country, dear to me from many considerations, or resort to its most distant and solitary regions, is the perpetual experience of neglect or enmity from almost every one but those who are supported by my resources. I shall cling, perhaps, during the infancy of my children to all the prepossessions attached to the country of my birth, hiding myself and Mary from that contempt which we so unjustly endure. I think, therefore, at present only of settling in Cumberland or Scotland. In the event the evils which will flow to my children from our desolate and solitary situation here point out an exile as the only resource to them against that injustice which we can easily despise. You will observe that the mere circumstance of our departing to the north of England and not immediately putting into effect our Italian scheme, it is strictly within the limits of the most formal intercourse that you should know. I might have misunderstood Turner, for I did not urge him to explain or literally repeat expressions, but it appeared to me from his conversation that you had communicated with him on the subject of our ancient intimacy, and of the occasion of its close, in a manner that expressed a certain degree of interest in my future prospects. I determined on that account to present to you a real picture of my feelings,

inasmuch as they would influence my plan of residence. If this exposure should be indifferent to you, *silence* will afford an obvious protection against additional mistake.

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P. B. SHELLEY.

I expect anxiously the Plan to which you alluded as an infallible expedient for my father to adopt that he might settle with me. I confess my hopes on that subject are very faint.

Hayward wrote to-day to say that he had everything ready for Monday, twelve o'clock. I shall be punctual.

The letter next in date recapitulates the incidents of Shelley's negotiation with his father. Mr. Thomas Turner, through whom, as interlocutor, Godwin communicated with Shelley, had as yet never seen Sir Bysshe's will, nor was he qualified to pronounce an opinion on difficult legal matters. A year and more had now elapsed since Sir Bysshe's death, and to one year was limited Shelley's option between entailing and possessing an interest in all the property, or not entailing and possessing an interest in the settled estates alone. Yet Mr. Turner assured Godwin that Shelley stood in relation to the will in the same position which he had occupied at his grandfather's death, and that it depended entirely on his inclination whether Godwin should receive the money he needed or not. "If he is really inclined to get the money," wrote Turner to Godwin, "there is no doubt of his power to do so." A full and explicit statement as to the state of his affairs, it seemed to Shelley, was now demanded of him.

*Shelley to Godwin.*

Bishopgate, February 26, 1816. Monday night.

I wish to God Turner's delusion had assumed any other shape, or that the painful task of destroying its flattering effects was reserved for some one less interested in your concerns than myself. He has entirely misapprehended the whole case. But I will endeavour to state it clearly.

I possessed in January, 1815, a reversion expectant on the death of the survivor of my grandfather and father, approaching so

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nearly to the nature of an absolute reversion, that by a few ceremonies I could, on these contingencies falling, possess myself of the fee-simple and alienate the whole. My grandfather had exerted the utmost power with which the law invested him to prevent this ultimate alienation, but his power terminated in my person, and was exercised only to the restraint of my father. The estate of which I now speak is that which is the subject of the settlement of 1792.

My grandfather's will was dictated by the same spirit which had produced the settlement. He desired to perpetuate a large mass of property. He therefore left the moiety of about £240,000 to be disposed of in the following manner. My father was to enjoy the interest of it *during his life*. *After my father's death* I was to enjoy the interest *alone* in like manner conditionally on my having previously deprived myself of the absolute power which I now possess over the settled estates of 1792, and so accept of the *reversion* of a life annuity of £12,000 or £14,000 per an. in exchange for a *reversion* of landed property of 6, 7, or 8000 per an. All was *reversion*. I was entitled, in no view of the case, to any *immediate* advantage.

My grandfather's will limited my option of accepting these conditions to one year from the date of his death. But I did not hesitate a moment to refuse them, nor until Longdill informed me that it was my father's desire and interest that I should act as I intended to act, did I see any necessity of making a secret of my resolution. I allowed Longdill, however, to manage these affairs in his own way; and he agreed with Whitton [Sir Timothy's solicitor] that I should refuse to accept my grandfather's legacy, and that my father should purchase of me my interest in the settled estates at a fair price. The project of this arrangement was very satisfactory to me, as I saw myself about to realize the very scheme best suited to the uncertainty of my health and the peculiarity of my views and situation, by the sacrifice of that which I never intended to accept.

I signed the deed of disclaimer for the purpose of making my father certain of my intentions, so that our operations need not wait for the expiration of the year appointed by my grandfather's will. If, as Turner says, I have the power to stand in the same situation with respect to my grandfather's will now as on the day of his death, that power is entirely worthless, and must, as you see, be placed out of our consideration.

Now lawyers say that my father dares not buy my interest in the settled estates of 1792, because such an act might induce a forfeiture of the additional income he derives from concurring with the intentions of the will.

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XII.

Jan. 1815-  
May, 1816.

After this clear recapitulation of facts, with which I had imagined you to be fully acquainted, I entreat you not to adopt Turner's delusive inference, that because "I am ready and desirous to fulfil my engagements your difficulties are therefore at an end."

Your letter of this morning, indeed, throws a new light on Turner's intervention, at least as I regard it. The mistake, the vital mistake, he has made appears to me by no means consistent with the legal acuteness you describe him to possess. I cannot help thinking that you transfer your just appreciation of his taste and his wit to a subject on which the very subtlety essential to these qualifications leads him astray. Or perhaps you are right, and he is not enough interested for you, not enough your friend to force his attention to the point. If he would think or act for your or my interests as for his own, then possibly he might deserve your opinion.

If, after this explanation, you continue to think that his suggestions would be valuable, I will contrive to see him without delay.

But without rejecting whatever Turner's kindness or experience could afford, are there no means of arriving at the same end? You do not understand the state of my affairs so exactly as a lawyer could explain it to you. You believe that I, from ignorance of law and the usages of the world, let pass opportunities of settling with my father. Cannot you explain the exact situation in which you stand with me to Sir James Mackintosh? He, I am informed, really desires to serve you, but is unable. If he knew how much of your future comfort depends on your having a true conception of the state of my affairs, surely he would with pleasure enter into such explanations with me as would make him master of the subject. His various life makes his experience far more valuable than that of Turner, even if you should judge that this latter surpassed him in intrinsic mental worth.

I will not add to the length of this letter by explaining a circumstance of no real moment but which asks a good many words; I shall so soon see either Turner or some other interlocutor on your part.

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XII.  
Jan. 1815-  
May, 1816.

I trust to your kindness that you will forbear showing this letter to Turner. I have spoken my real doubts of his efficiency which, should an occasion require, I would not shrink to repeat in his presence. But he is apt to take offence, and I am too generally hated not to feel that the smallest kindness from an old acquaintance is valuable.

P. B. SHELLEY.

February 27.

I open this letter to mention that for some days I shall be quite incapable of active exertion. I was seized last night with symptoms of irritable fever, and my state requires rest to prevent serious effects.

"I am too generally hated not to feel that the smallest kindness from an old acquaintance is valuable." These words, which closed Shelley's letter, were an indirect appeal to Godwin's good feeling, and his response (March 5) would seem to have been that the very fact of his receiving from Shelley pecuniary obligations now forbade any show of friendliness, lest it should seem that he were bribed into acquiescence with wrong-doing. Shelley's reply overflows with bitterness and indignation.

*Shelley to Godwin.*

13, Norfolk Street, March 6, 1816.

The first part of your letter alludes to a subject in which my feelings are most deeply interested, and on which I could wish to receive an entire explanation. I confess that I do not understand how the pecuniary engagements subsisting between us in any degree impose restrictions on your conduct towards me. They did not, at least to your knowledge or with your consent, exist at the period of my return from France, and yet your conduct towards me and your daughter was then precisely such as it is at present. Perhaps I ought to except the tone which you assumed in conversation with Turner respecting me, which, for anything that I learn from you, I know not how favourably he may not have perverted. In my judgment neither I, nor your daughter, nor her offspring, ought to receive the treatment which we encounter on every side. It has perpetually appeared to me to have been your

especial duty to see that, so far as mankind value your good opinion, we were dealt justly by, and that a young family, innocent and benevolent and united, should not be confounded with prostitutes and seducers. My astonishment, and I will confess when I have been treated with most harshness and cruelty by you, my indignation has been extreme, that, knowing as you do my nature, any considerations should have prevailed on you to have been thus harsh and cruel. I lamented also over my ruined hopes, of all that your genius once taught me to expect from your virtue, when I found that for yourself, your family, and your creditors, you would submit to that communication with me which you once rejected and abhorred, and which no pity for my poverty or sufferings, assumed willingly for you, could avail to extort. Do not talk of *forgiveness* again to me, for my blood boils in my veins, and my gall rises against all that bears the human form, when I think of what I, their benefactor and ardent lover, have endured of enmity and contempt from you and from all mankind.

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Jan. 1815-  
May, 1816.

I cannot mix the feelings to which you have given birth with details in answer to your view of my affairs. I can only say that I think you are too sanguine, but that I will do all that I can not to disappoint you. I see much difficulty and some danger, but I [am] in no temper to overrate my own inconveniences. I shall certainly remain in London some days, perhaps longer, as affairs appear to require. Meanwhile, oblige me by referring to the letter in which I mention Bryant, and enclose me his direction as soon as possible. I have left his letter at Bishopgate. I will take an early opportunity of replying to your letter at length, if no other mode of explanation suggests itself.\*

To which outbreak Godwin replied immediately with the equanimity which he cultivated and in which he had a pride. "I am sorry to say," he wrote, "that your letter this moment received is written in a style the very opposite of conciliation, so that if I were to answer it in the same style we should be involved in a controversy of inextinguishable bitterness. As long as understanding and sentiment shall exist in this frame, I shall never cease from my disapprobation of that act of yours which I regard as the great calamity of my life. But the deed being

\* The letter is complete, but, like that of March 9, is unsigned.



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May, 1816.

past and incapable of being recalled, it may become a reasonable man to consider how far he can mitigate that anguish which he has felt towards the actor in the affair under which he suffers. The sense of the first paragraph of my letter is to be found in every book of sound morality and the principles of moral conduct that ever was written."

*Shelley to Godwin.*

13, Norfolk Street, March 7, 1816.

The hopes which I had conceived of receiving from you the treatment and consideration which I esteem to be justly due to me were destroyed by your letter dated the 5th. The feelings occasioned by this discovery were so bitter and so excruciating that I am resolved for the future to stifle all those expectations which my sanguine temper too readily erects on the slightest relaxation of the contempt and the neglect in the midst of which I live. I must appear the reverse of what I really am, haughty and hard, if I am not to see myself and all that I love trampled upon and outraged. Pardon me, I do intreat you, if, pursued by the conviction that where my true character is most entirely known, I there meet with the most systematic injustice, I have expressed myself with violence. Overlook a fault caused by your own equivocal politeness, and I will offend no more. We will confine our communications to business. . . .

I plainly see how necessary immediate advances are to your concerns, and will take care that I shall fail in nothing which I can do to procure them.

I shall remain in town at least another week, that I may give every possible attention to this subject. My own concerns are decided, I fear, already.

P. B. SHELLEY.

Shelley's mind was now set upon a residence abroad, but he waited for the final decision of the Court of Chancery on the question in doubt between himself and his father, and bargained meanwhile with attorneys and money-lenders—Hayward, Bryant, Dawe—on Godwin's behalf, not without a sense that such bargaining was a task for which he was ill qualified by his character and temper of mind.

*Shelley to Godwin.*CHAP.  
XII.Jan. 1815-  
May, 1816.

I had a long and most painful conversation with Turner last night on the subject of your pecuniary distress. I am not, as he, I fear, leaves you to infer, unwilling to do my utmost, nor does my disposition in the least depend on the question of your demonstrating personal kindness to myself or Mary. I see that, if anything is to be done, it must be done instantly. You know my habitual, my constitutional inability to deal with monied men. I have no friend who will supply this deficiency, none who interest themselves in my own, much less in your concerns, which I have, as much as one man can make those of another, made my own. Can you not yourself see these money-lenders? Hayward's partner was in Chancery yesterday, when he heard my title to the reversion admitted to be excellent, and my powers, over that which I pretend to, unimpeached. Would H. advance money on post-obit or deferred annuity? Can you not see him?

I shall be absent from town to-day, to-morrow, and part of the following day. Fanny can communicate, should anything important occur, with Mary on this subject. Her sentiments in all respects coincide with mine; her interest is perhaps greater; her judgment, from what she knows of our situation, of what ought and can be done, is probably more calm and firm.

Chancery, as you have heard, has given a doubtful and hesitating opinion. Whatever is to be done for me will be reluctantly done.

P. B. SHELLEY.

Marchmont Street, March 29, 1816.

Five days before this letter was written Shelley repeatedly called at the house in Skinner Street; we may surmise that Godwin was absent, or that his absence was professed as an excuse for not admitting Shelley. Our authentic information is, however, limited to what we learn from the brief entry in Godwin's diary: "P. B. S. calls three times; C[harles] C[lairmont] twice; Jane [Clairmont] sleeps."\* Early in April Godwin started for Scotland, where he desired to confer with

\* In March Godwin paid a visit to Mr. Turner at Bracknell. With Turner he walked to Binfield; not, however, as has been stated, to see Shelley and Mary, for they were now residing at Bishopsgate, not at Binfield.

CHAP. Constable on the subject of his novel "Mandeville," on which  
XII. he was now engaged, and the correspondence with Shelley  
Jan. 1815- ceased for a time. Before it was resumed a decision had been  
May, 1816. given in the Court of Chancery against the projected purchase  
of the reversion by his father, and Shelley, who would seem  
to have waited for this decision before leaving the neighbour-  
hood of London, was now on his way to the Continent.

END OF VOL. I.

